SEISHINSHA COMICS

FULL FLOWER GARDEN

百花庭園の悲劇

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青心社

百花庭園の悲劇

1 Prologue

9 Hyakka Teien no Higeki

Prologue

Last night, an old man died suddenly
while attending a party.

It's absurd,

but it seems

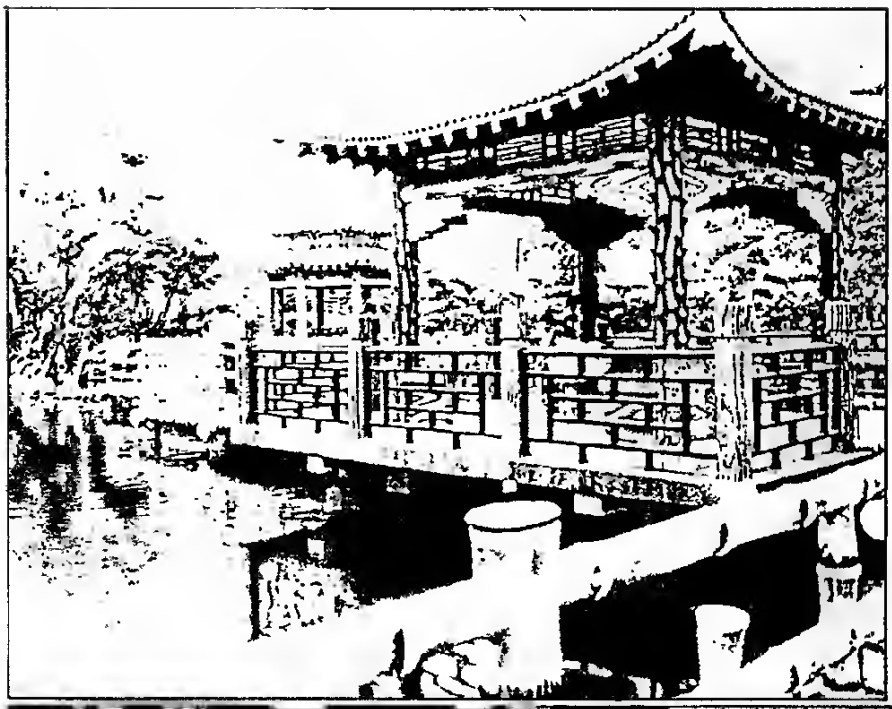
that legend

contains an element of truth.

It's the 2020's by the Western calendar.
Around here, no one speaks of "fairies" anymore,
but the city nights still teem with them.

There was a rumor the old man died
from witnessing the fairy of
the Garden of Many Flowers.

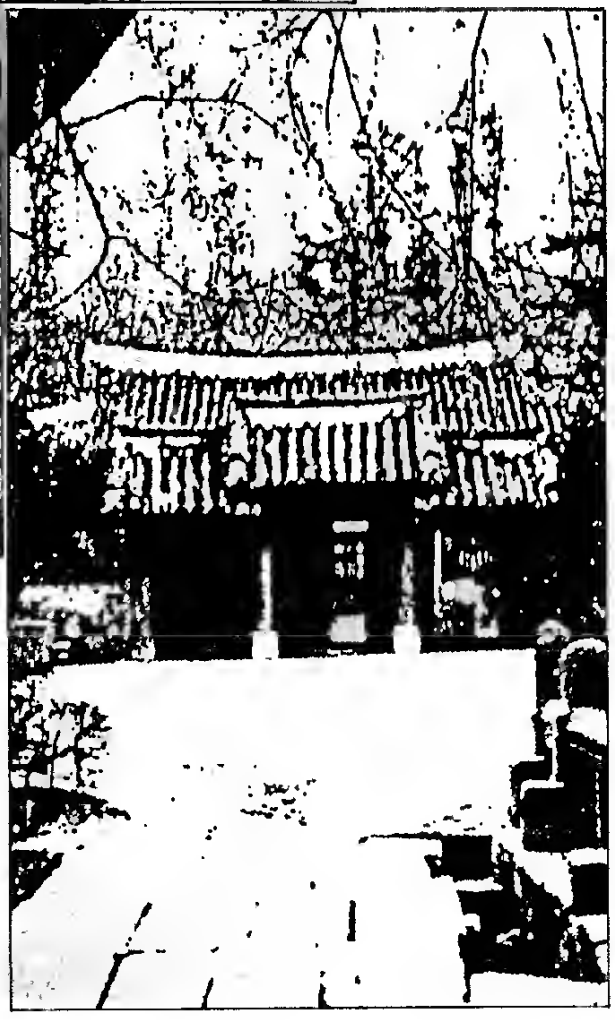
This "Garden of Many Flowers"
is a Chinese style garden
located in the outskirts of the city.



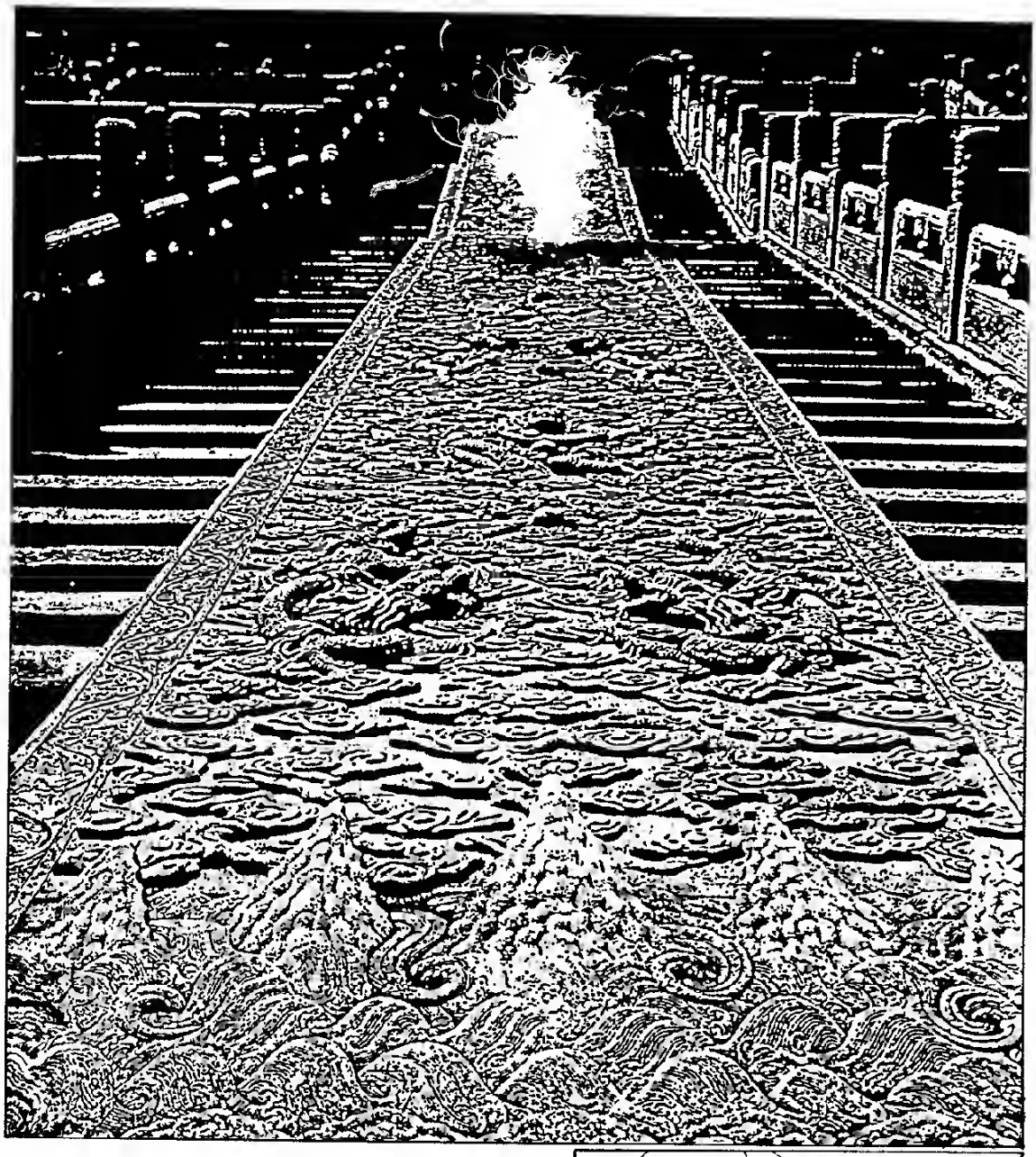
It's the only wild
thing left in
Neo-Hong Kong.
Flowers of all
seasons are
constantly blooming.

They say that a single
pass around the garden
diminishes one's life
expectancy by a year.

No one comes near,
and there is no
caretaker
for the flowers.



But who does care for the flowers?
They retain a luster
as though watered with blood.
Year by year, through crossbreeding,
new species of flowers blossom.
So too in this garden dwells a fairy.
They say that he who sees her
will draw his final breath before dawn.



I forget who ordered it,
but my job was to shoot her
and snuff out the legend
of the fairy
with a single bullet.

bang

There's at least a bit of truth to the legend.
The last several days,
continuing my hunt in the garden,
my strength faltering,
many times even a warning shot
could be all it takes.

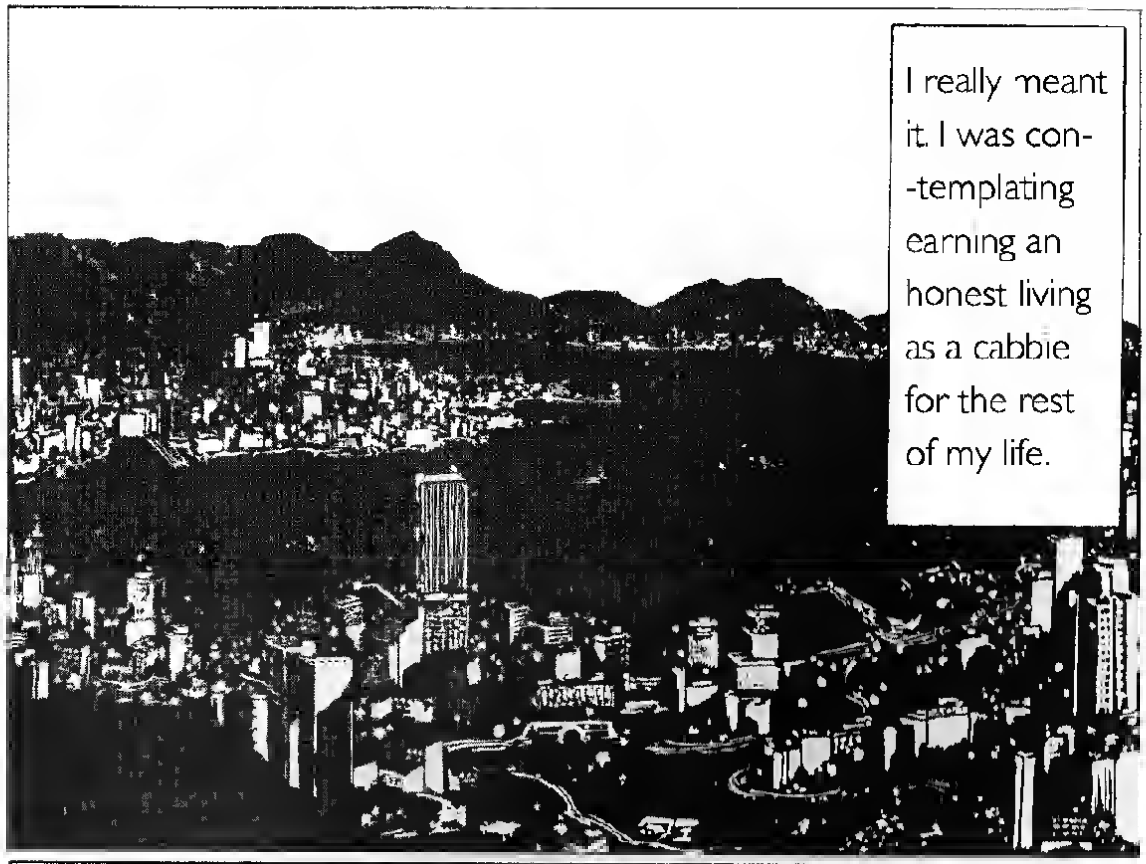
But even given that,
for the time being,
it looks like the game
will continue:

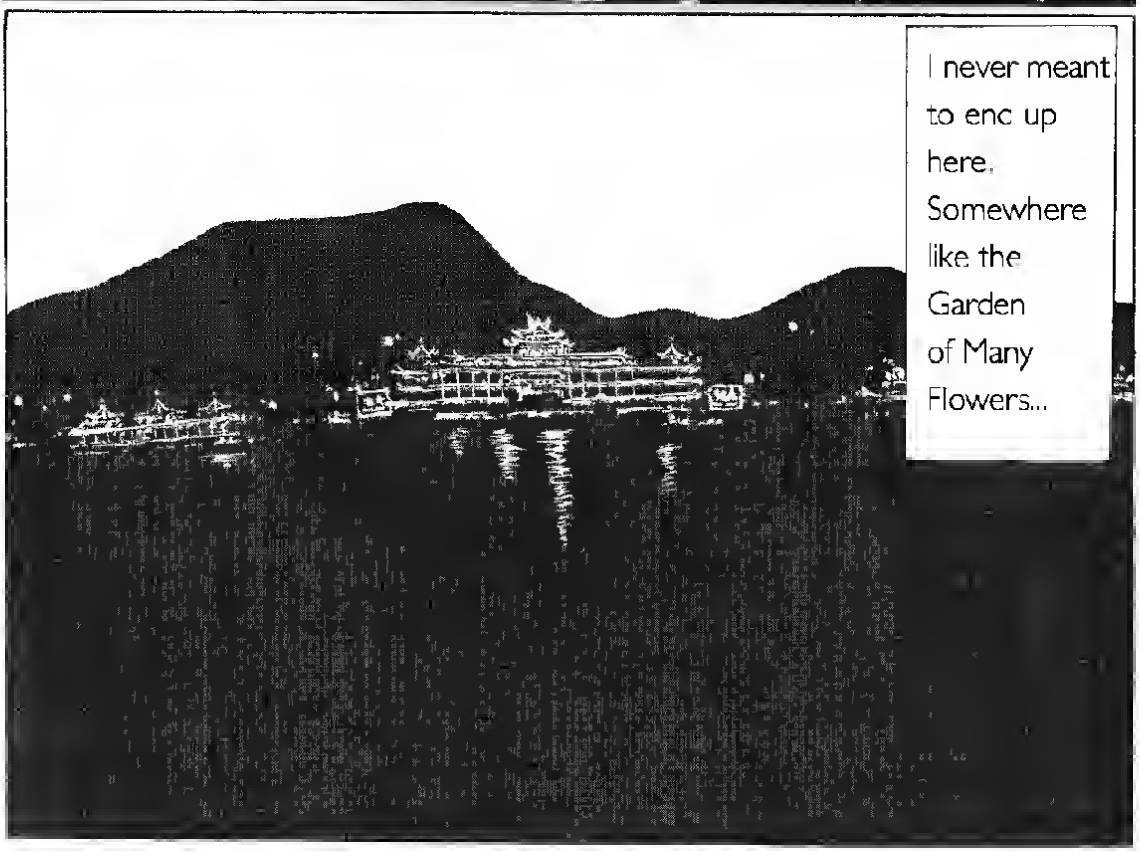
Cat and mouse.
Mouse and cat.

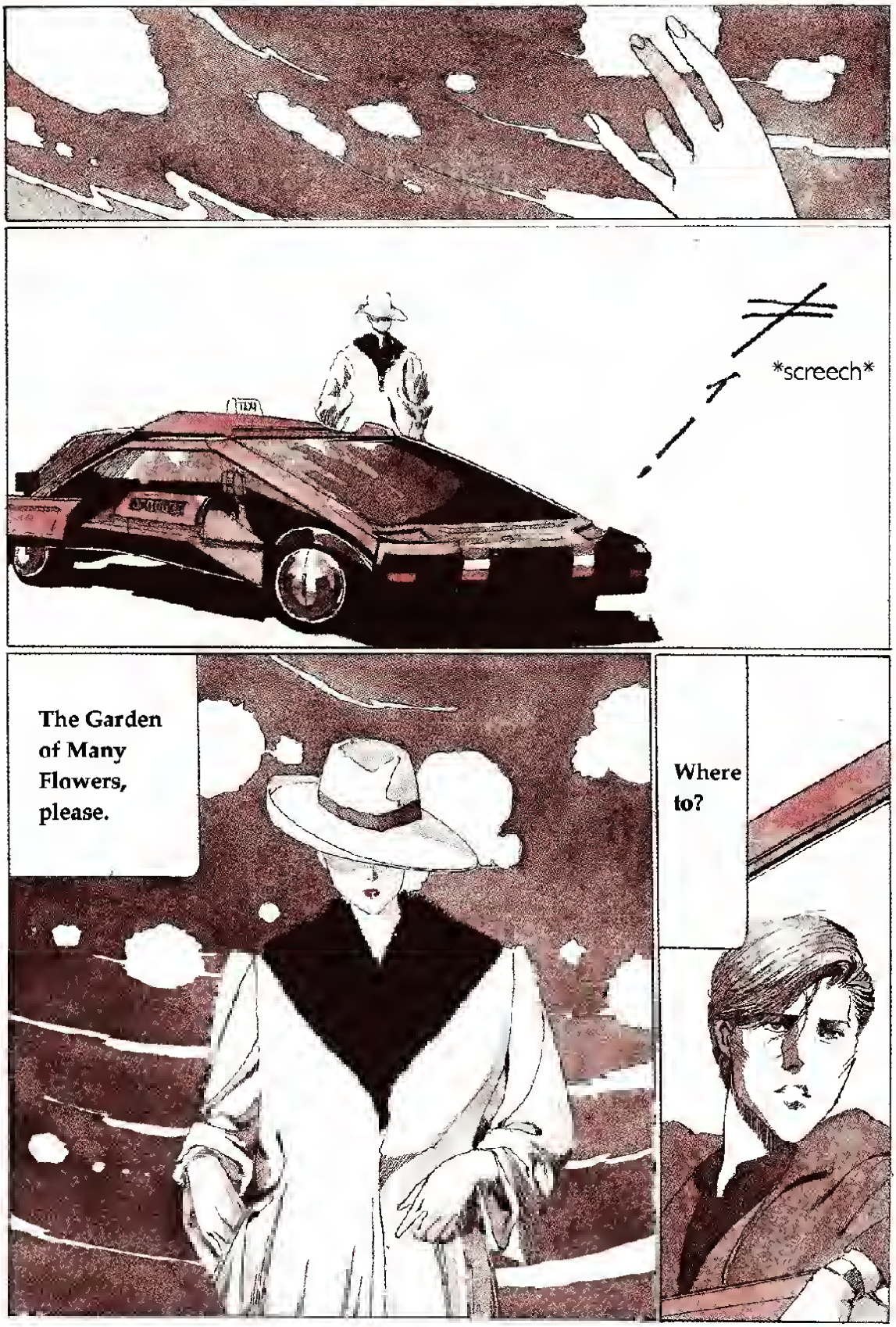
Hyakka Teien no Higeki

The Tragedy of the Garden of Many Flowers

百花庭園の悲劇

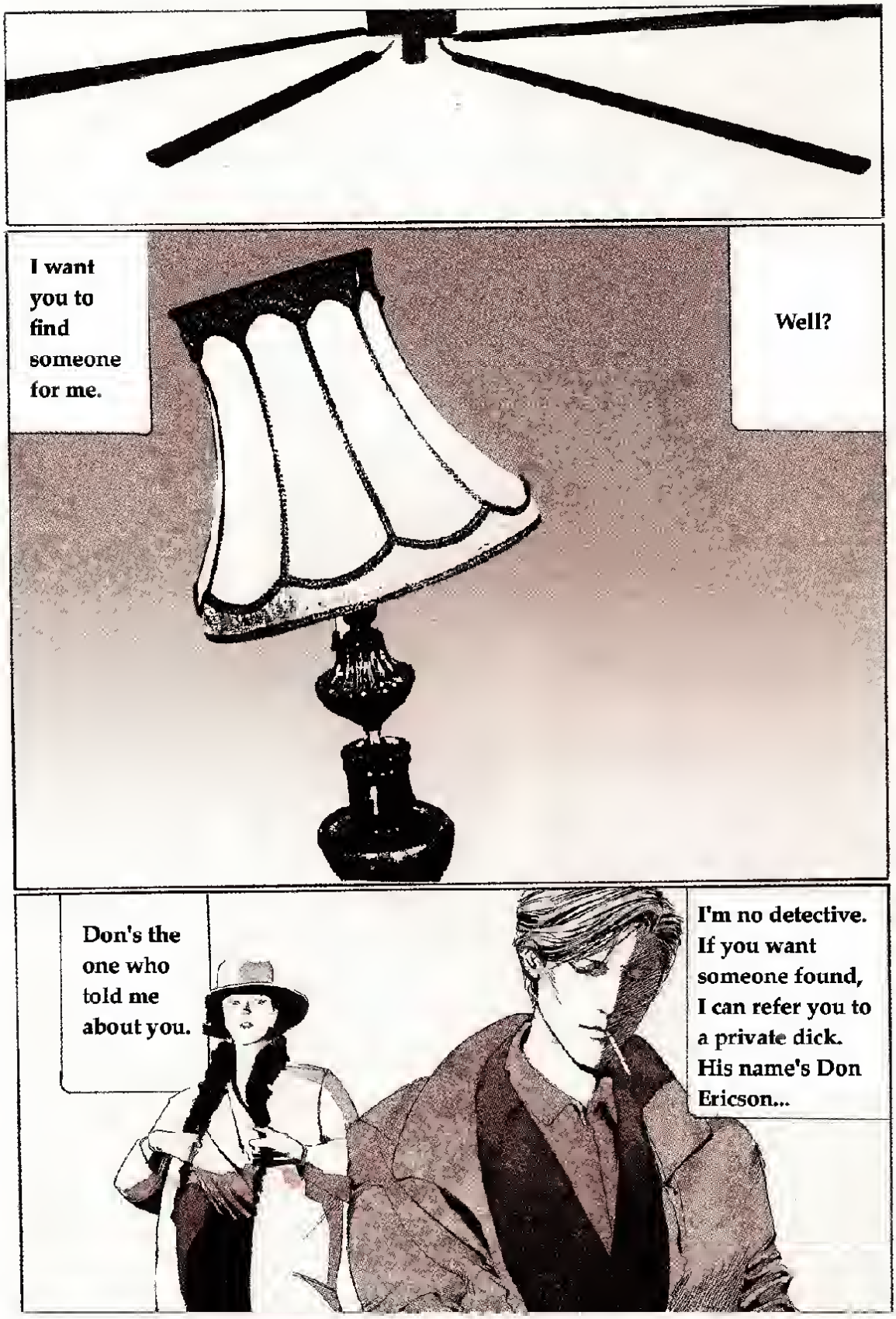

I really meant it. I was con--templating earning an honest living as a cabbie for the rest of my life.


I never meant to end up here. Somewhere like the Garden of Many Flowers...

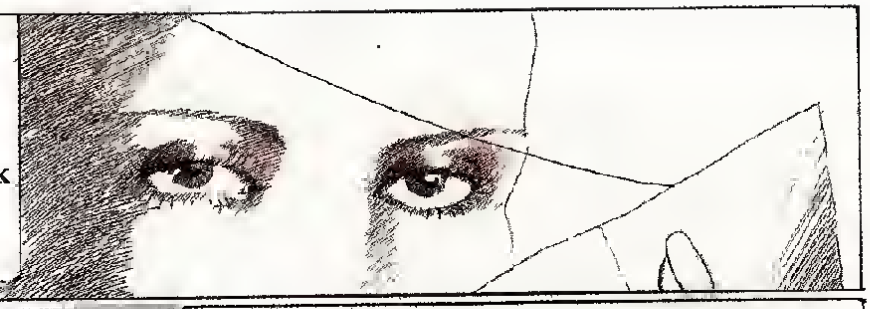

screech
The Garden of Many Flowers, please.
Where to?

It's a beautiful place, isn't it?
Sorry, but you won't be able to get in to see it.
The Garden of Many Flowers? The area's off limits right now.
Is it true what they say about someone dying from seeing the fairy?
Who knows. But with all the mysterious deaths lately and the caretaker dying, people are spreading rumors.

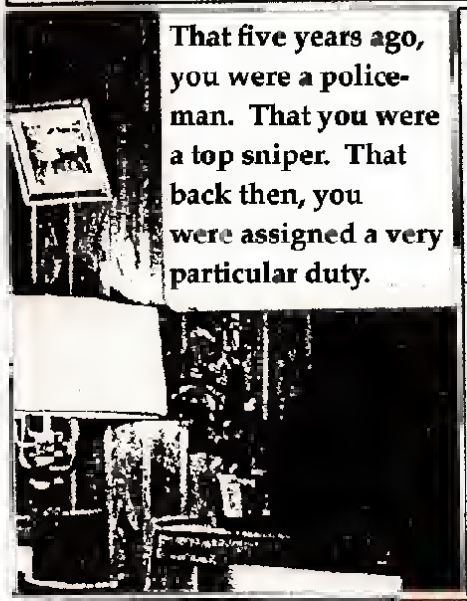
What do you think, Left Handed Doug?
I've changed my mind: Take me to your place.


I want you to find someone for me.
Well?
Don's the one who told me about you.
I'm no detective. If you want someone found, I can refer you to a private dick. His name's Don Ericson...

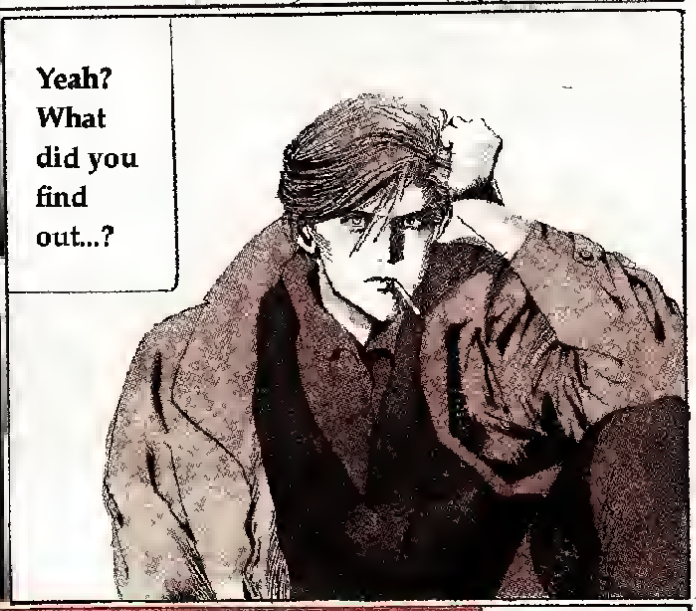
I even have a letter of introduction. While I was at it, I had someone look you up for me.



That five years ago, you were a policeman. That you were a top sniper. That back then, you were assigned a very particular duty.



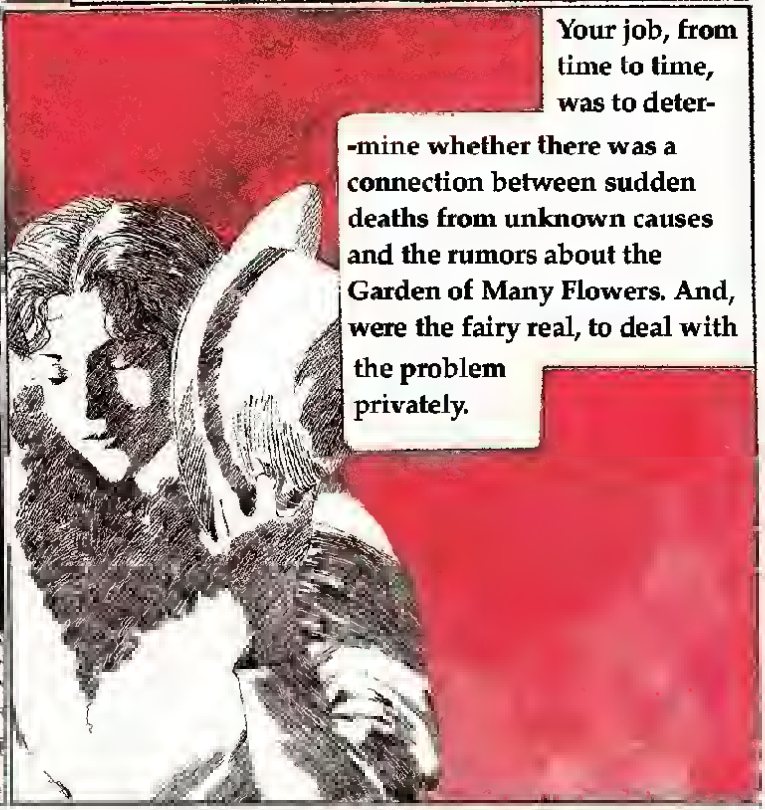
Yeah? What did you find out...?

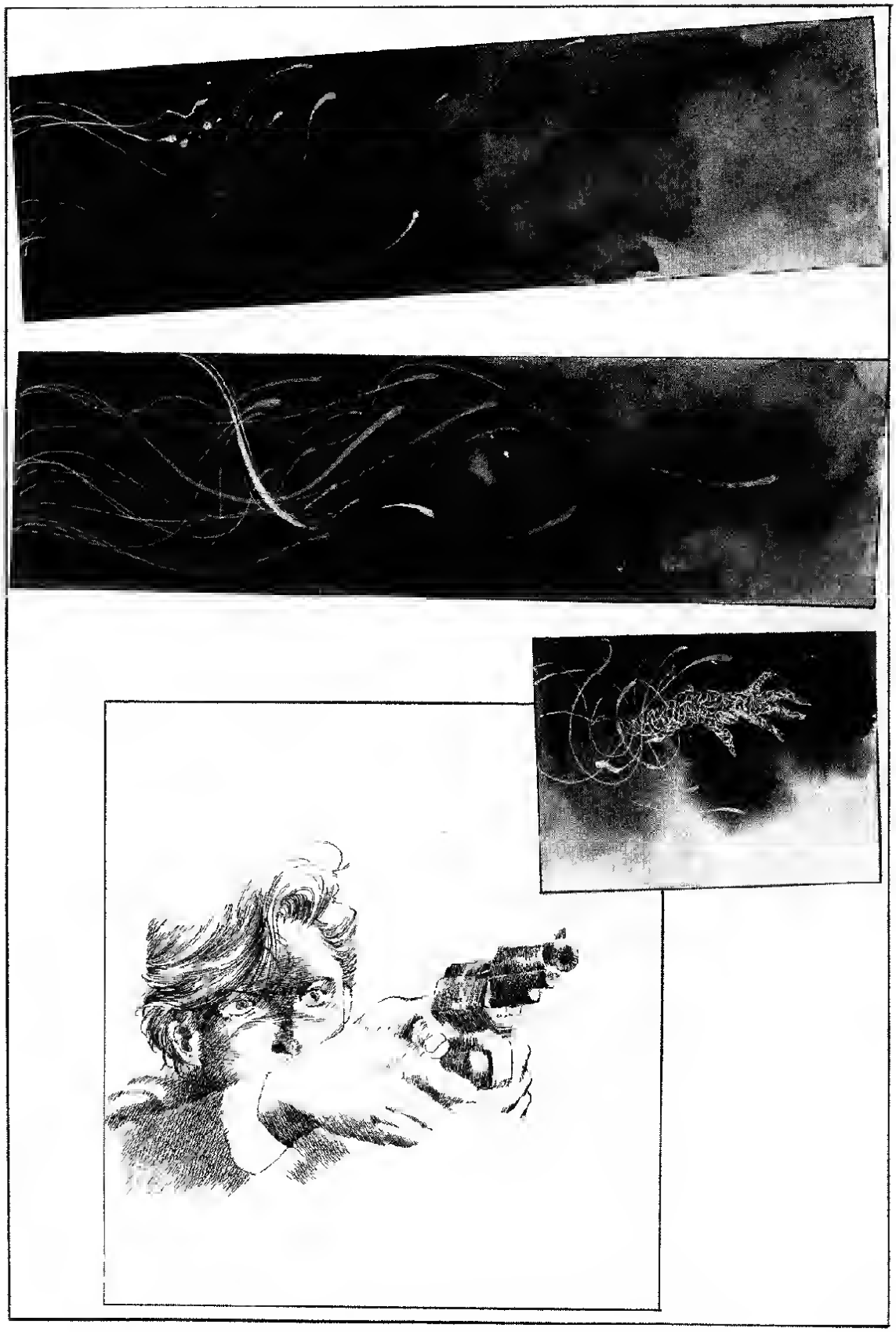


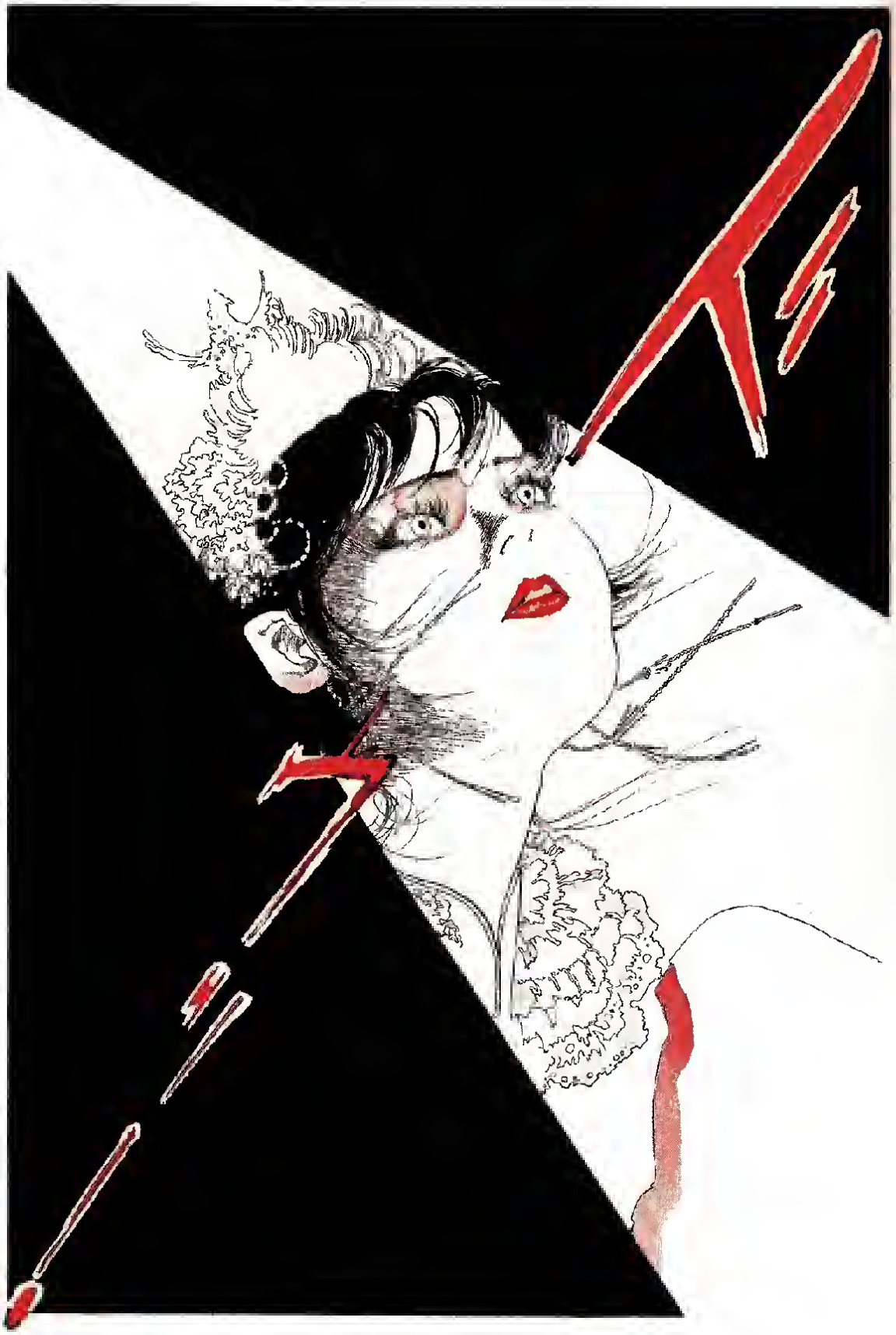
And then you retired over the Suzie Wong incident.

Your job, from time to time, was to deter-

-mine whether there was a connection between sudden deaths from unknown causes and the rumors about the Garden of Many Flowers. And, were the fairy real, to deal with the problem privately.

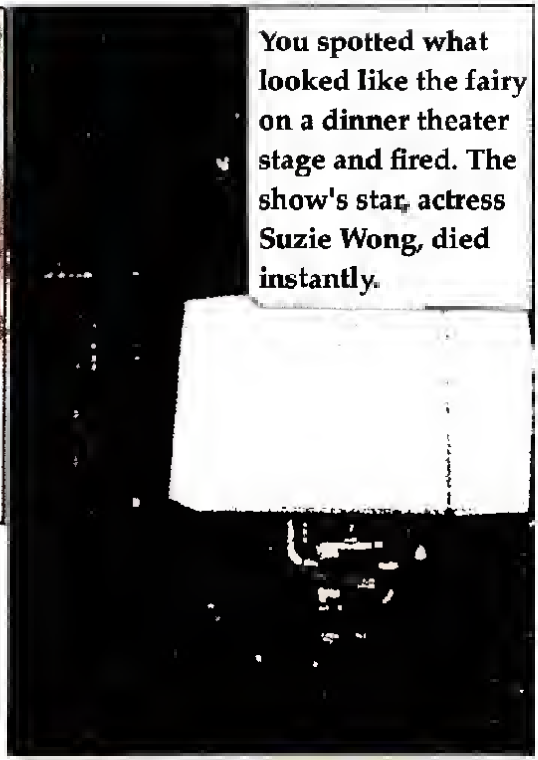






bang

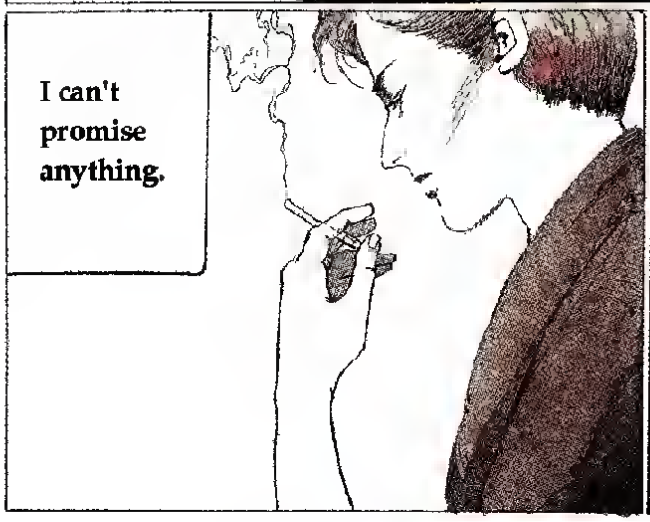
That was an accident. My eyes were playing tricks on me.



You spotted what looked like the fairy on a dinner theater stage and fired. The show's star, actress Suzie Wong, died instantly.

No. You did see the fairy. But unlike in the stories, you didn't die.

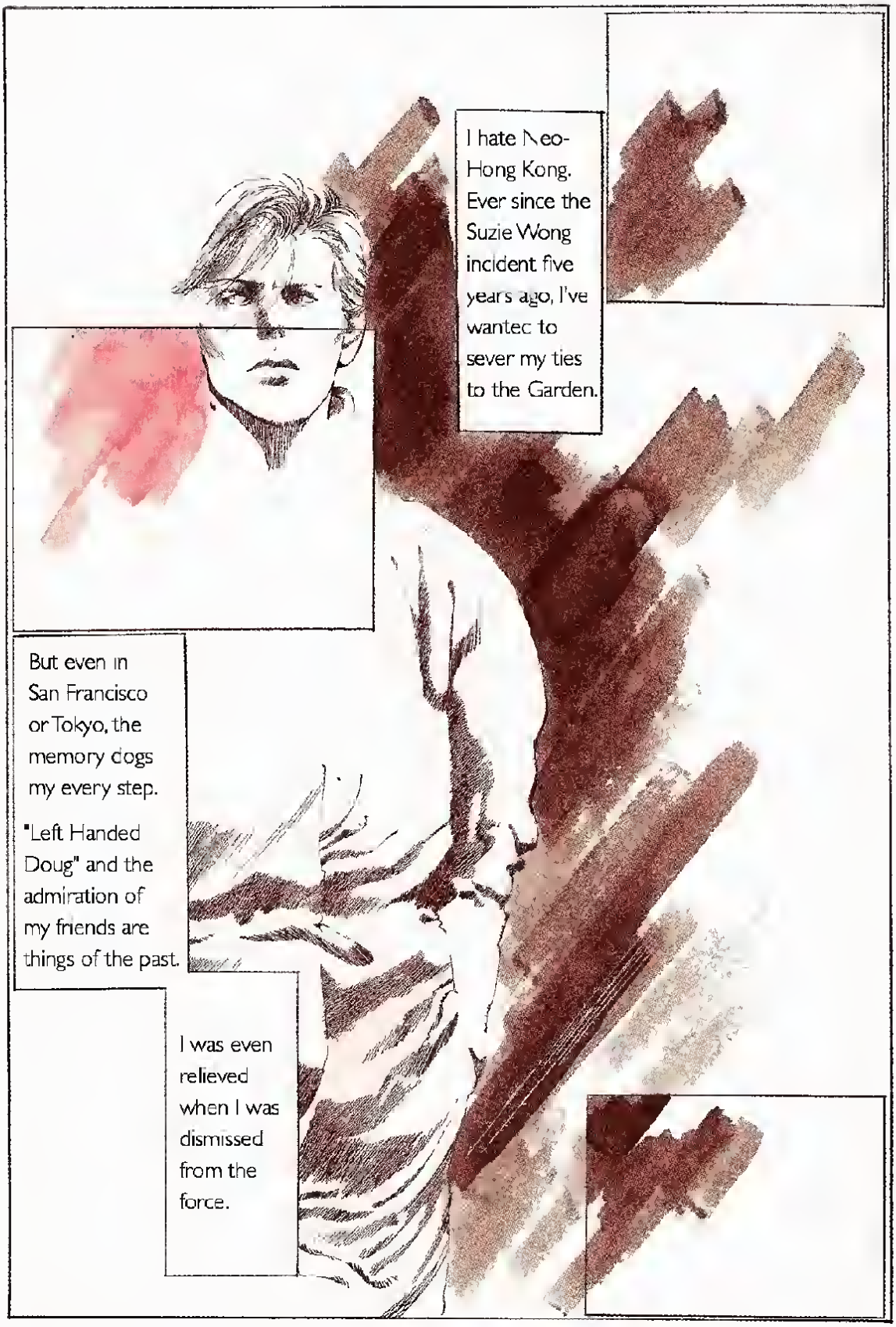
I can't promise anything.



I want you to look for my husband.

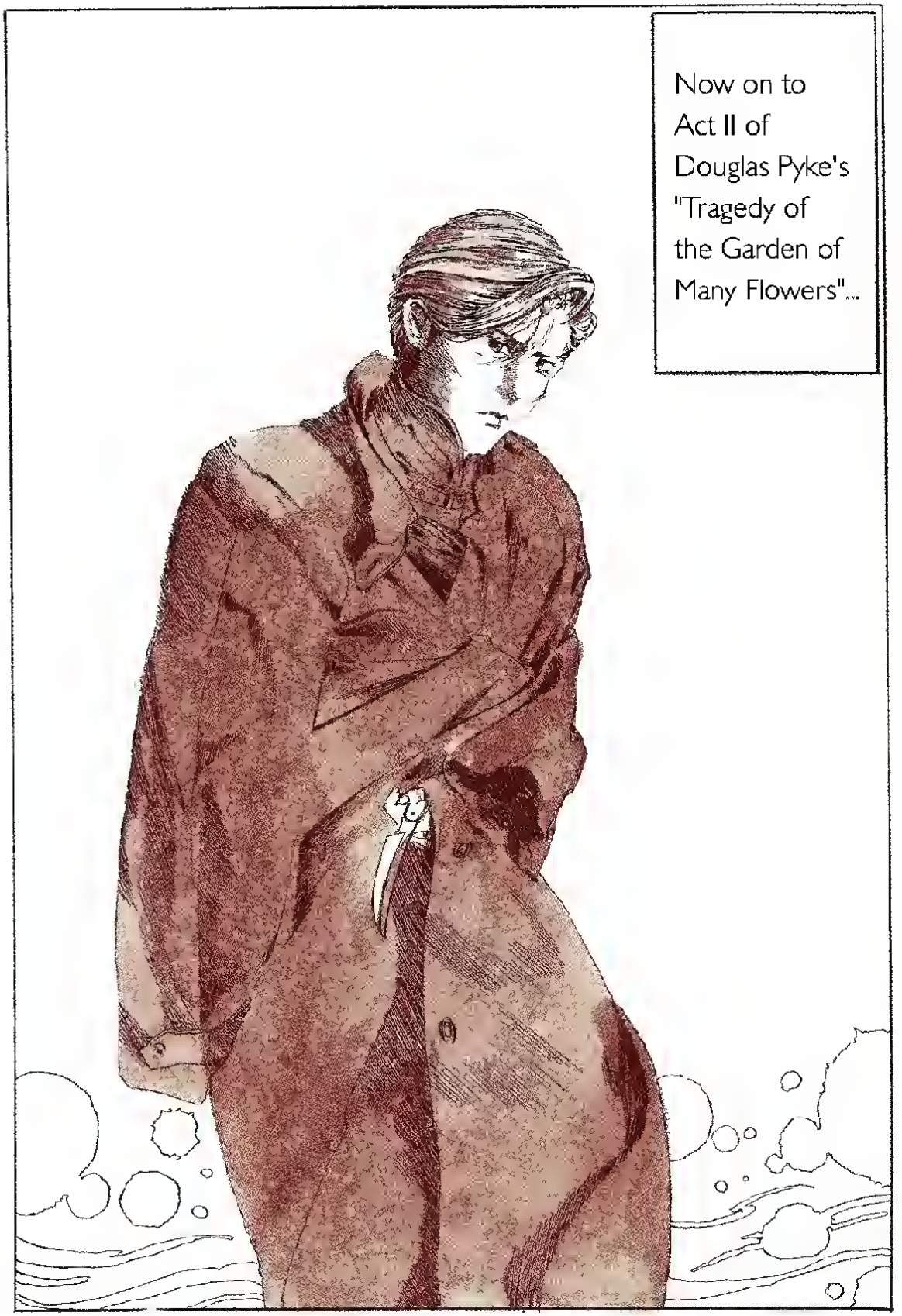
And he's a good man.
This is my husband, Brian Emmett. He's a botanist.
Five years ago, he was studying a new species of flower known as *Lilith emeteos*. Last month, he went missing in the Garden of Many Flowers.
That's all I know about him.
I met him in July, we married in August, and he disappeared in September. So, yes, that's it.
That's it?

I'll think about it.
You're the only one who can go into the garden. Everyone else is too afraid. Say you'll look for him?
I'll expect your report every Wednesday night.
Well then, here's your retainer and some money for expenses.
My, but you're a cold one. I'm sorry.
Don't count on anything.
I'll be praying for your safety and for my husband's.

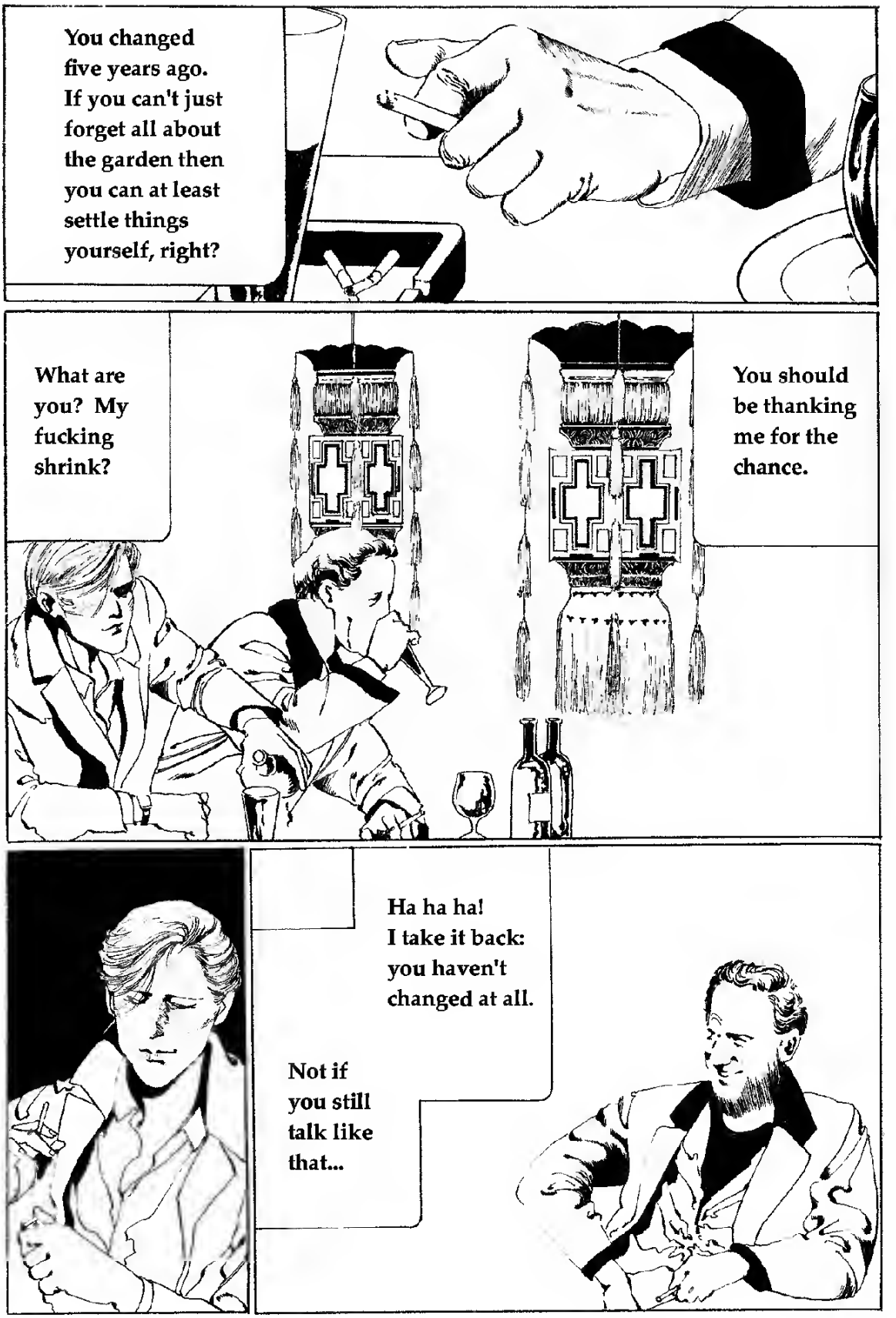

I hate Neo-Hong Kong. Ever since the Suzie Wong incident five years ago, I've wantec to sever my ties to the Garden.
But even in San Francisco or Tokyo, the memory dogs my every step.
"Left Handed Doug" and the admiration of my friends are things of the past.
I was even relieved when I was dismissed from the force.

Long time no see, Doug.
But what's this mood? I need to go back to my happy place.
LAI MOON KEE RATTAN
MASSAGE
What's with the face? Can't a guy visit his old subordinate?

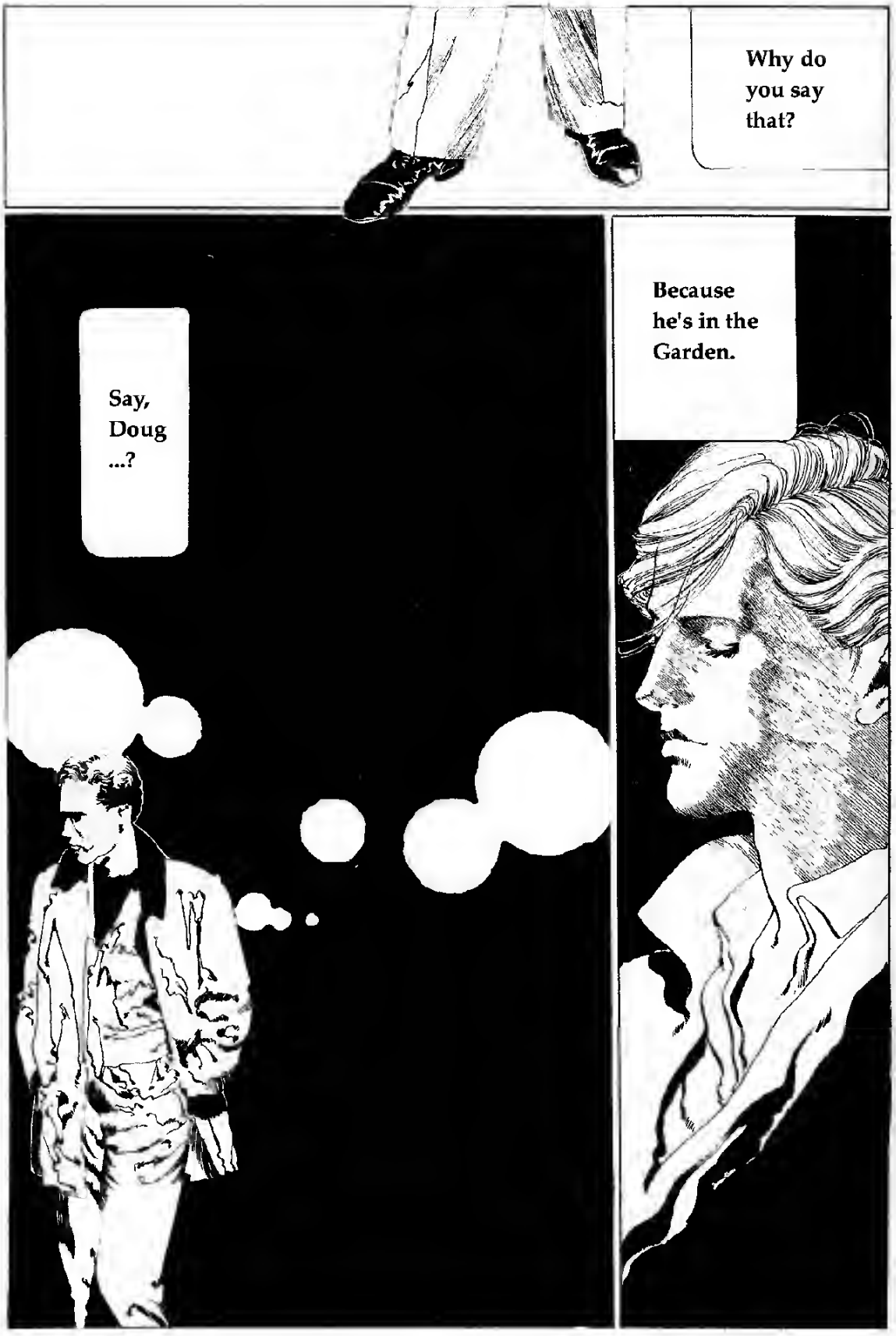
Did you take that woman's case?
That's what I should be asking you.
Are you looking for something?
If you were tailing me, don't you already know?
For god's sake, don't stir things up. Two more years of uneventful service and I'll be old enough to retire. I just want to avoid another Left Handed Doug firefight.
You were a good subordinate. My current subordinates are real cute too.
Believe me.


Now on to Act II of Douglas Pyke's "Tragedy of the Garden of Many Flowers"...

Thanks to you, I'm turning into Alice in Wonderland.
Donald Ericson, you really are a bastard.
Hey, don't get so worked up. If you didn't like it, you shouldn't have taken Mrs. Emmett's case.


You changed five years ago. If you can't just forget all about the garden then you can at least settle things yourself, right?
What are you? My fucking shrink?
You should be thanking me for the chance.
Ha ha ha! I take it back: you haven't changed at all.
Not if you still talk like that...

"What?" he says... The search for Dr. Emmett. Got any leads?
What?
So... How's it going?
Assuming he's still alive...
Maybe, maybe not. But if he *is* still alive, he must not be able to come back to his wife.
You're saying he's dead?


Why do you say that?
Say, Doug ...?
Because he's in the Garden.

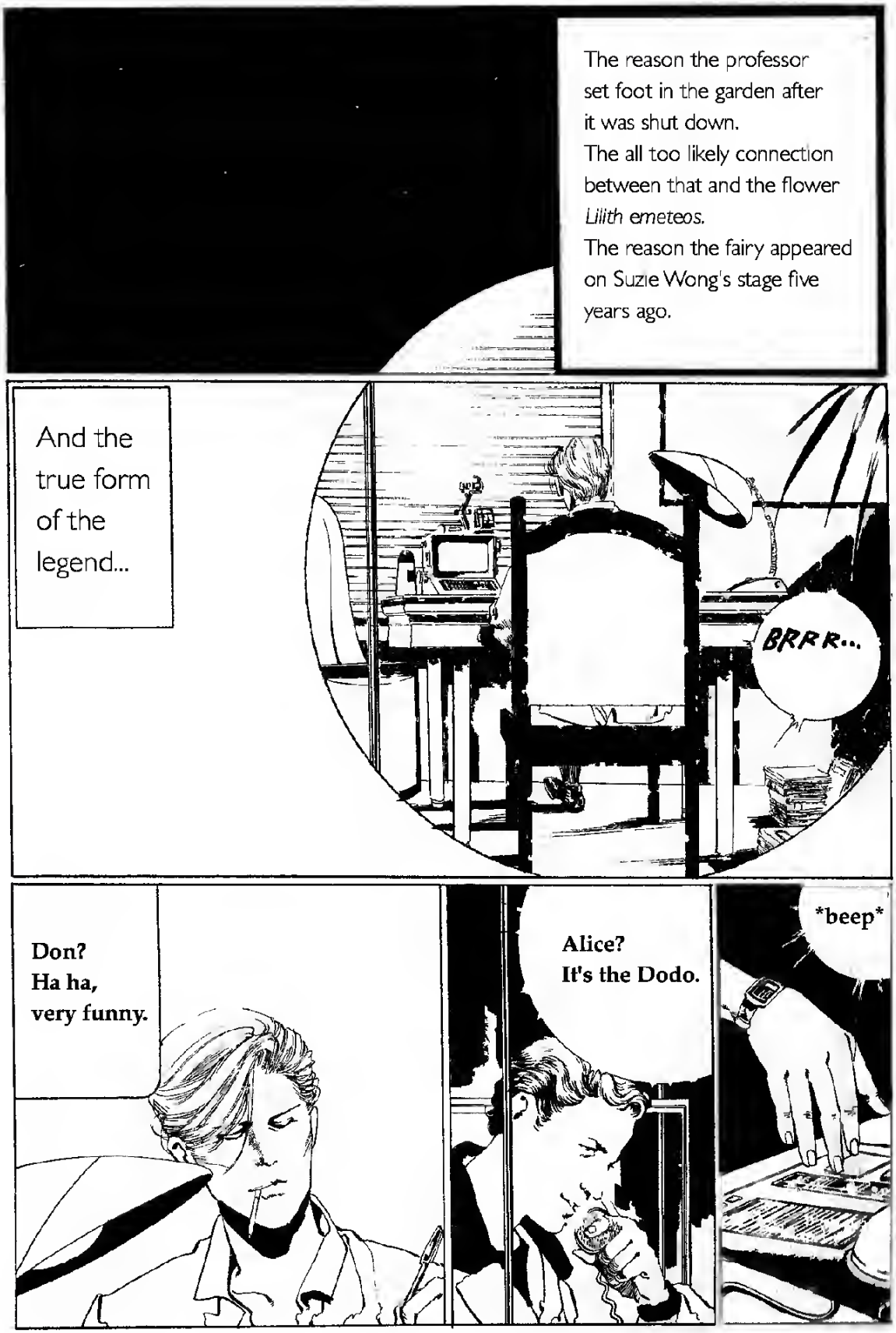
While you're chasing some guy who's left nothing but his smile behind, how about we look for the door?
Sounds good.
I am Alice after all...
SEAPALACE

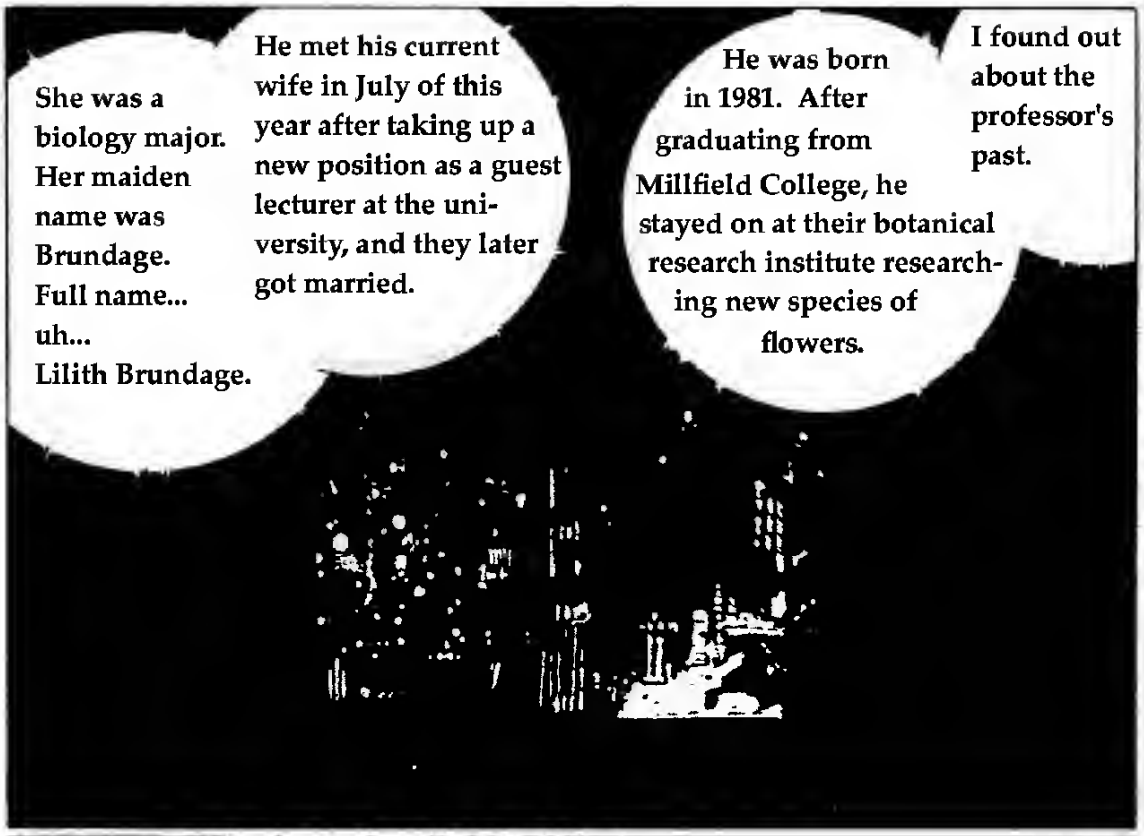
That riddle-like conversation with Don Ericson has always stuck with me.

If I was Alice, who was the rabbit with the pocket watch who jumped down the hole?

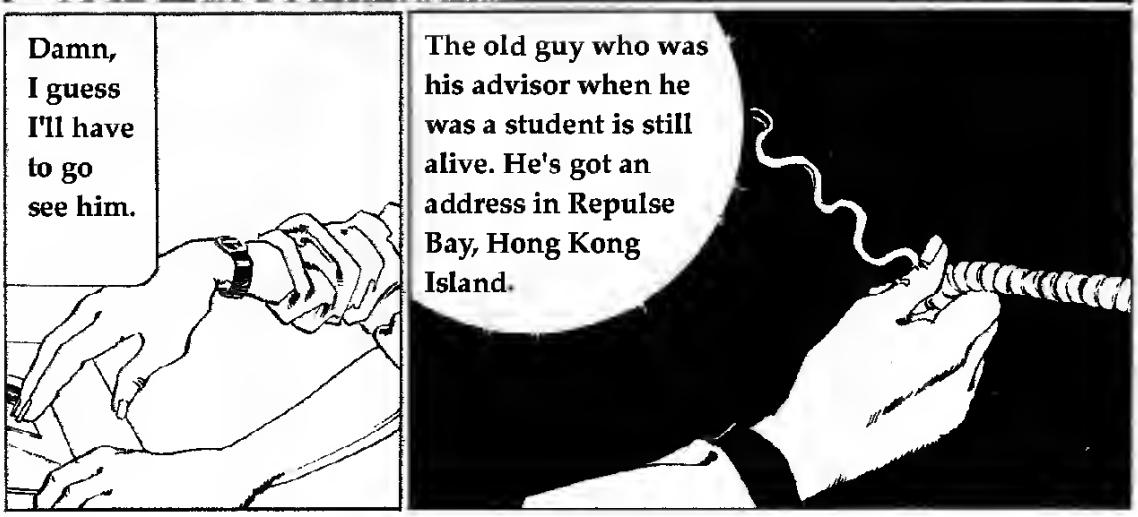
What playing cards were going to rain down on me?

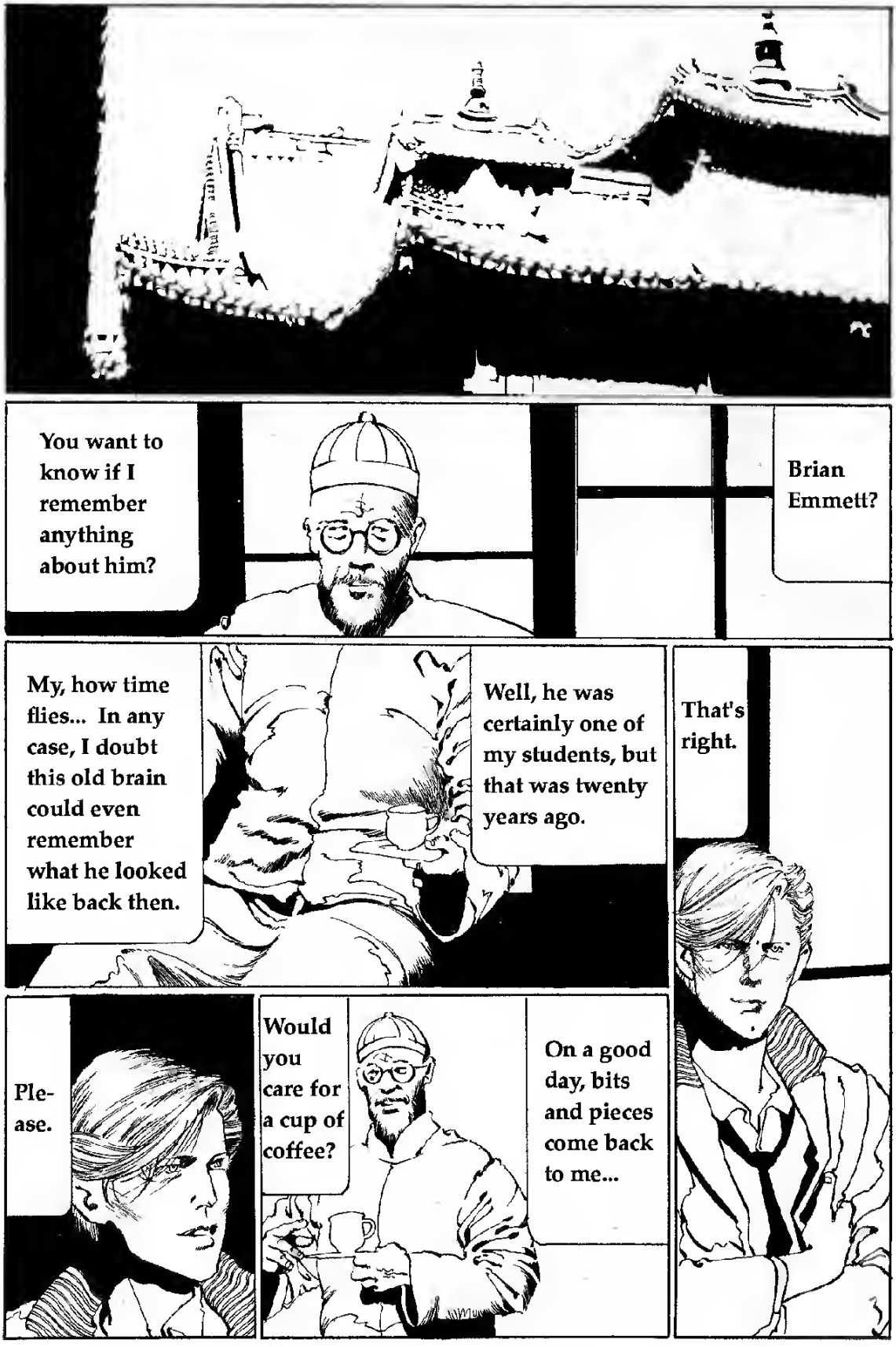
My wariness won out over a sudden impulsiveness. There was still too much I didn't understand.

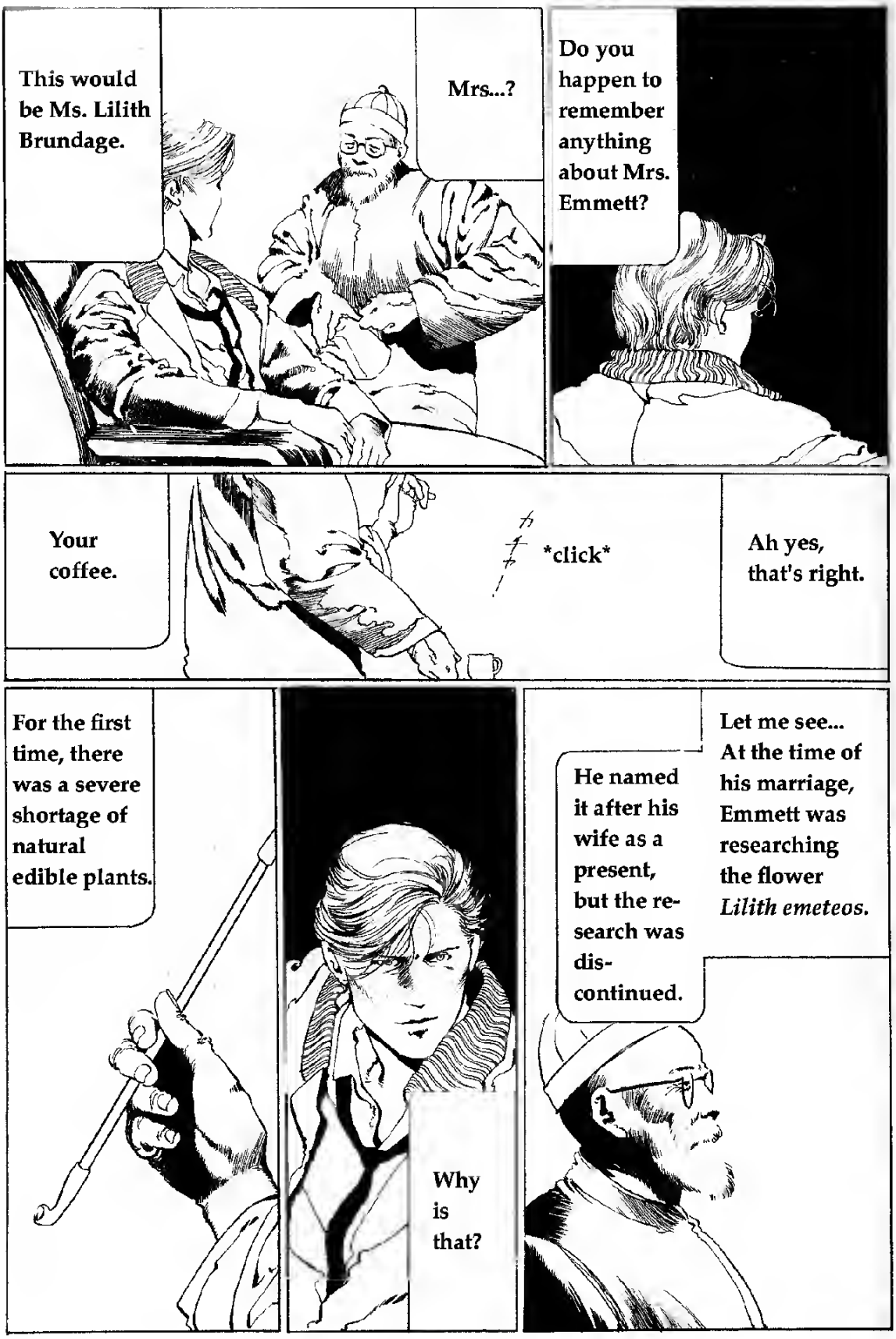

The reason the professor set foot in the garden after it was shut down.
The all too likely connection between that and the flower *Lilith emeteos.*
The reason the fairy appeared on Suzie Wong's stage five years ago.
And the true form of the legend...
BRRR...
Don? Ha ha, very funny.
Alice? It's the Dodo.
beep

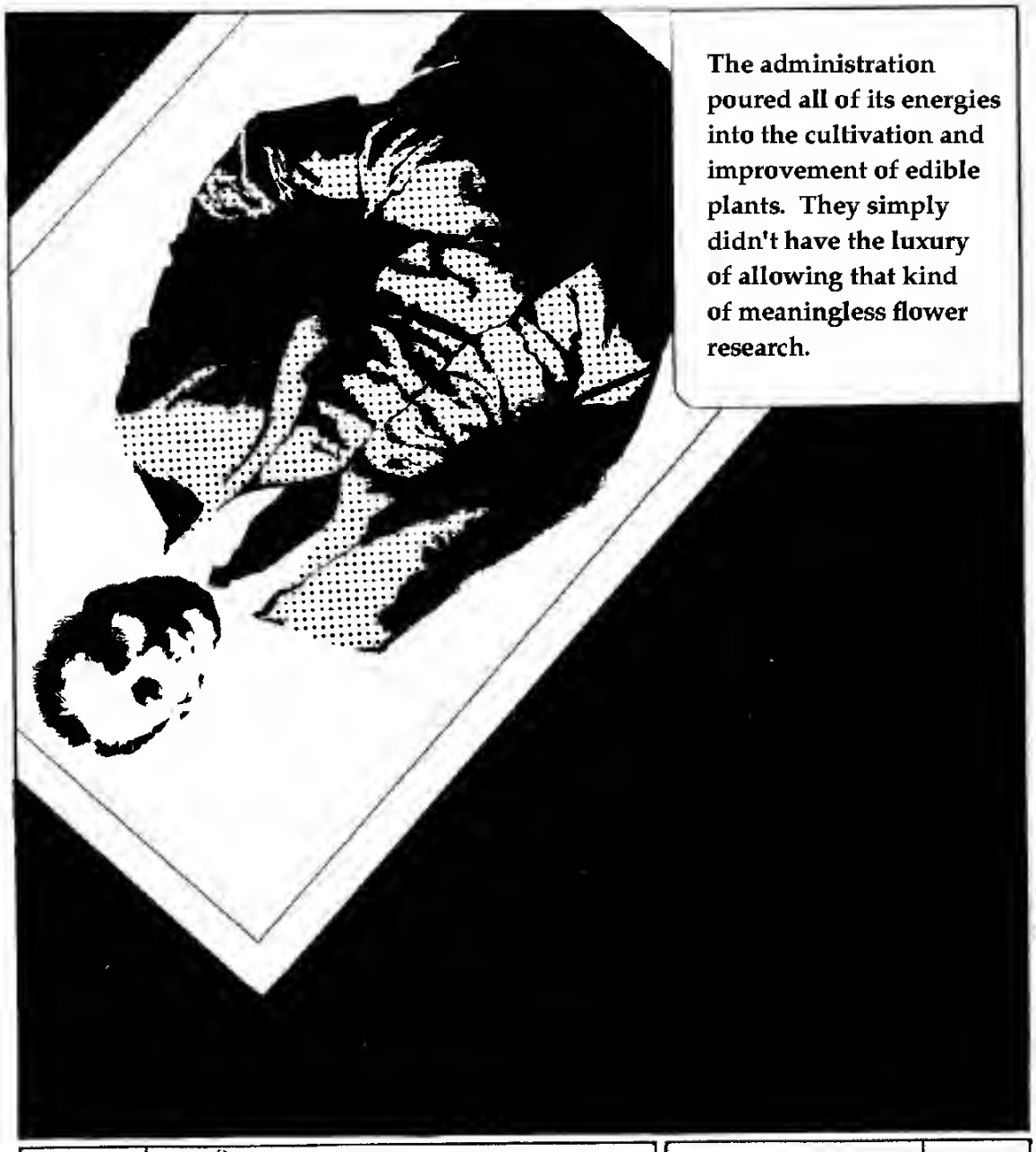

She was a biology major. Her maiden name was Brundage. Full name... uh... Lilith Brundage.
He met his current wife in July of this year after taking up a new position as a guest lecturer at the university, and they later got married.
He was born in 1981. After graduating from Millfield College, he stayed on at their botanical research institute researching new species of flowers.
I found out about the professor's past.

Lilith ...?


Damn, I guess I'll have to go see him.
The old guy who was his advisor when he was a student is still alive. He's got an address in Repulse Bay, Hong Kong Island.

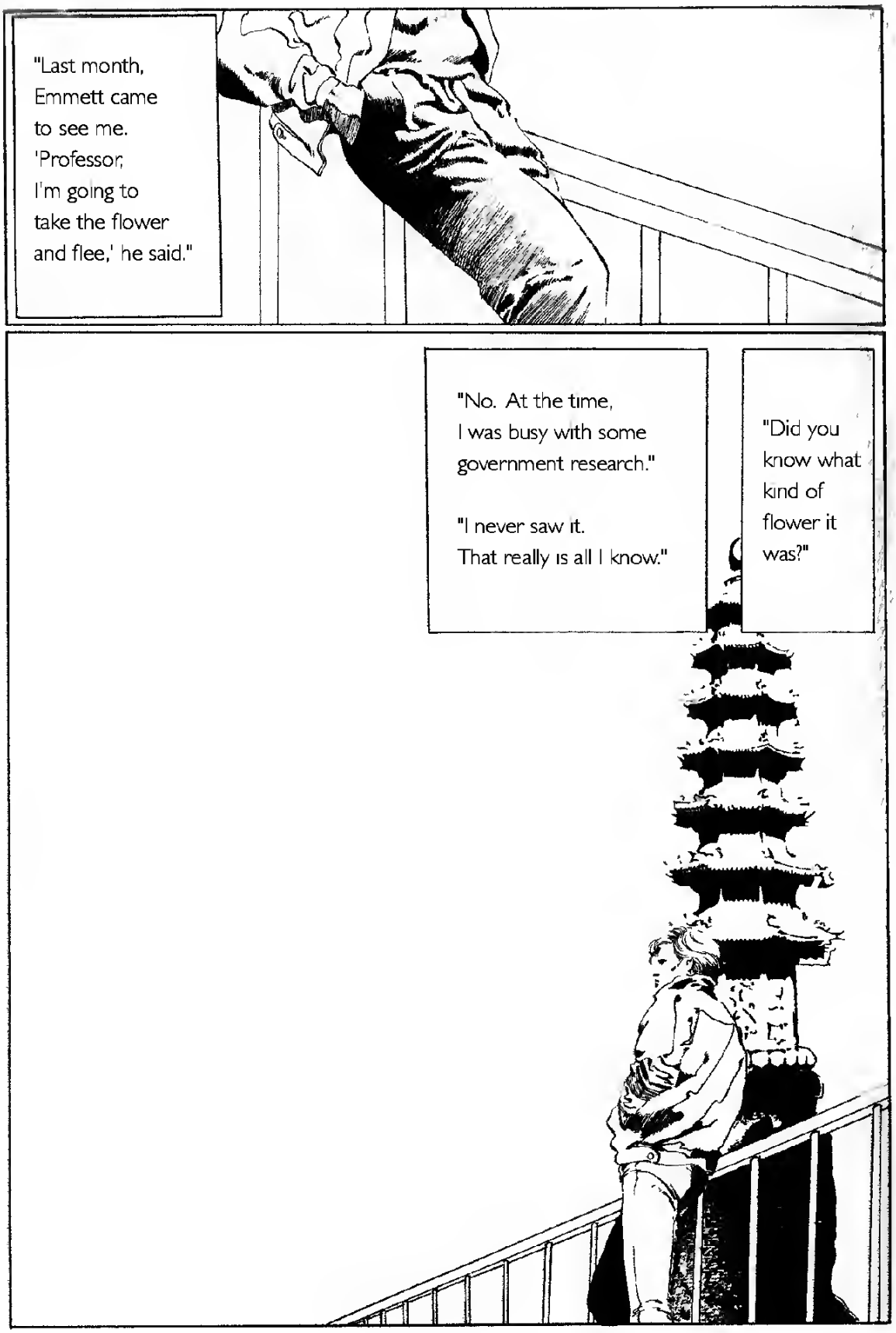

You want to know if I remember anything about him?
Brian Emmett?
My, how time flies... In any case, I doubt this old brain could even remember what he looked like back then.
Well, he was certainly one of my students, but that was twenty years ago.
That's right.
Ple-ase.
Would you care for a cup of coffee?
On a good day, bits and pieces come back to me...

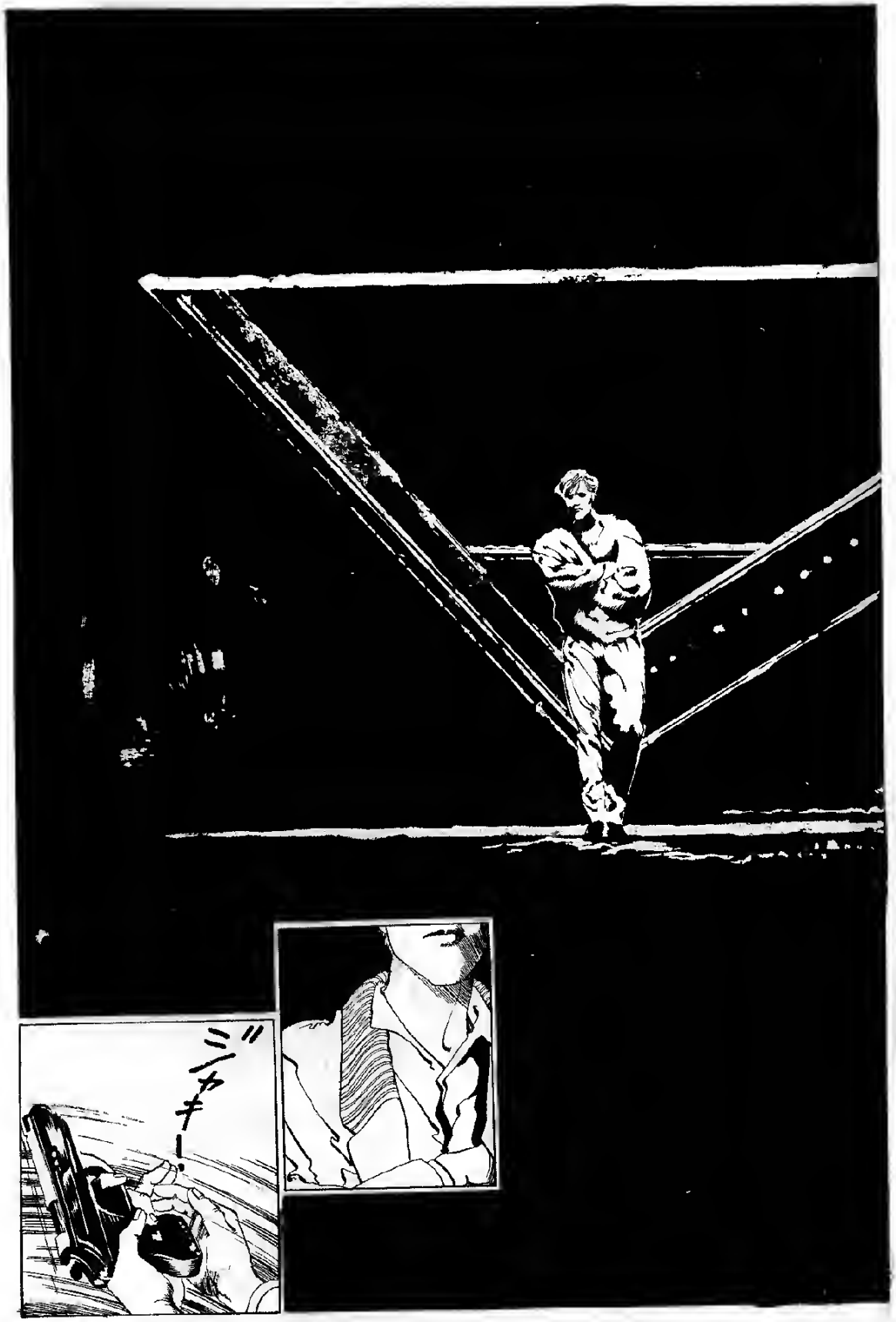

This would be Ms. Lilith Brundage.
Mrs...?
Do you happen to remember anything about Mrs. Emmett?
Your coffee.
click
Ah yes, that's right.
For the first time, there was a severe shortage of natural edible plants.
Why is that?
He named it after his wife as a present, but the research was discontinued.
Let me see... At the time of his marriage, Emmett was researching the flower *Lilith emeteos.*


The administration poured all of its energies into the cultivation and improvement of edible plants. They simply didn't have the luxury of allowing that kind of meaningless flower research.

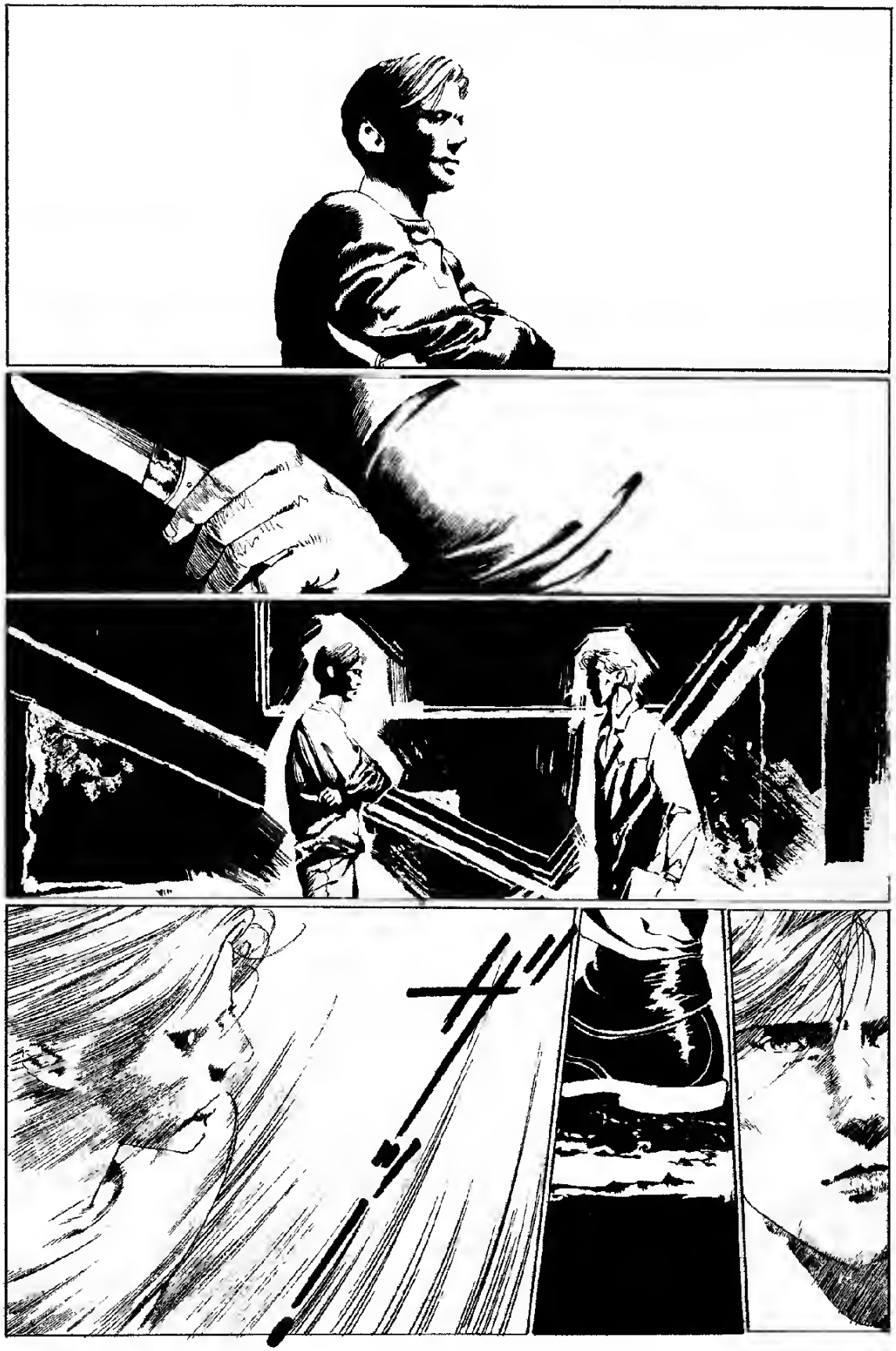
.....

Go on, have a sip.


"Last month, Emmett came to see me. 'Professor, I'm going to take the flower and flee,' he said."
"No. At the time, I was busy with some government research."
"I never saw it. That really is all I know."
"Did you know what kind of flower it was?"



whshh

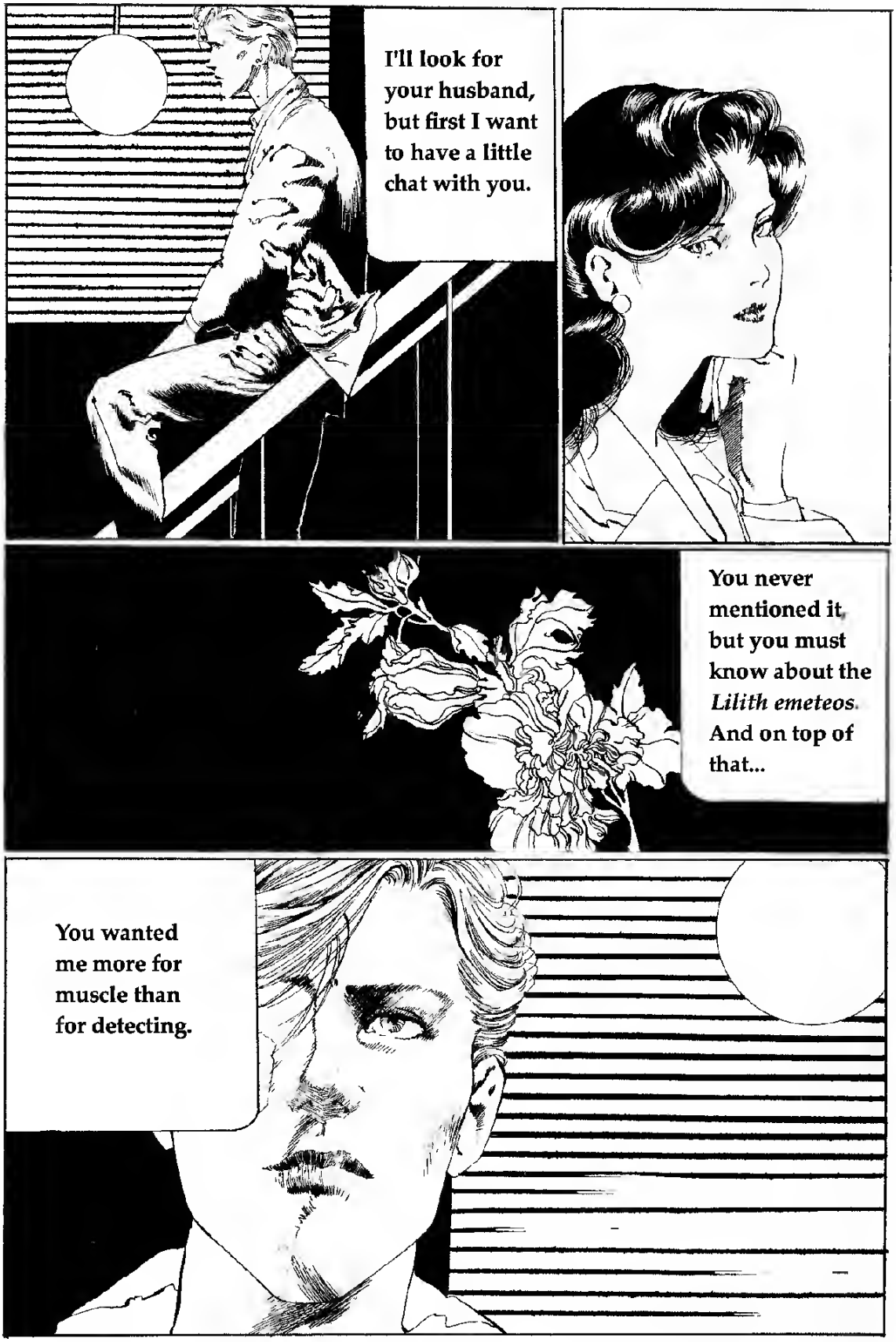


whoosh

41 ***blam***

knock
knock
knock
Enter.
beep
AS PYKE
swish

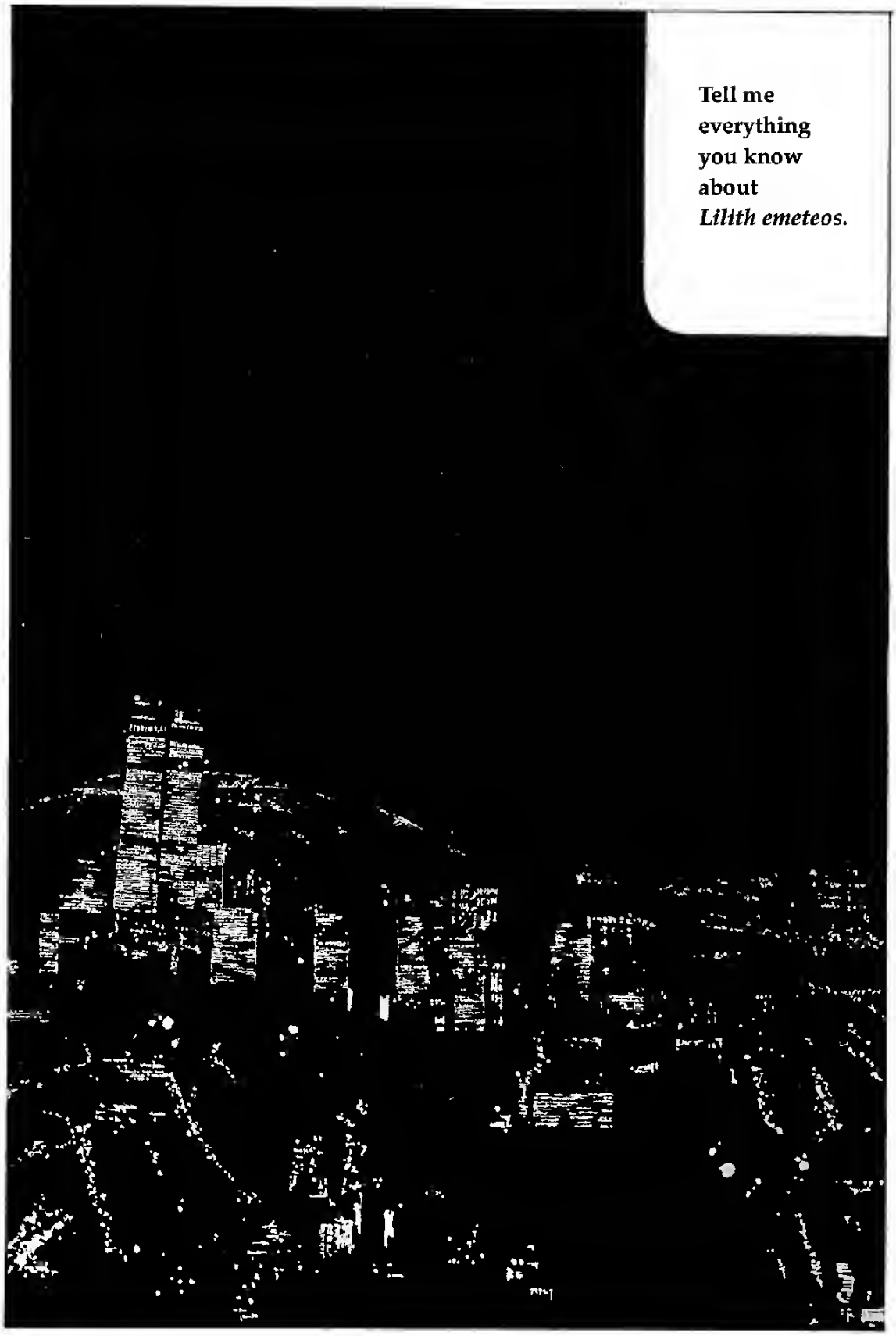
I'm here for my report. Have you found out anything?
Last night, I shot myself.
As cliched as that sounds, yes.
You mean it was one of the fairy's tricks?

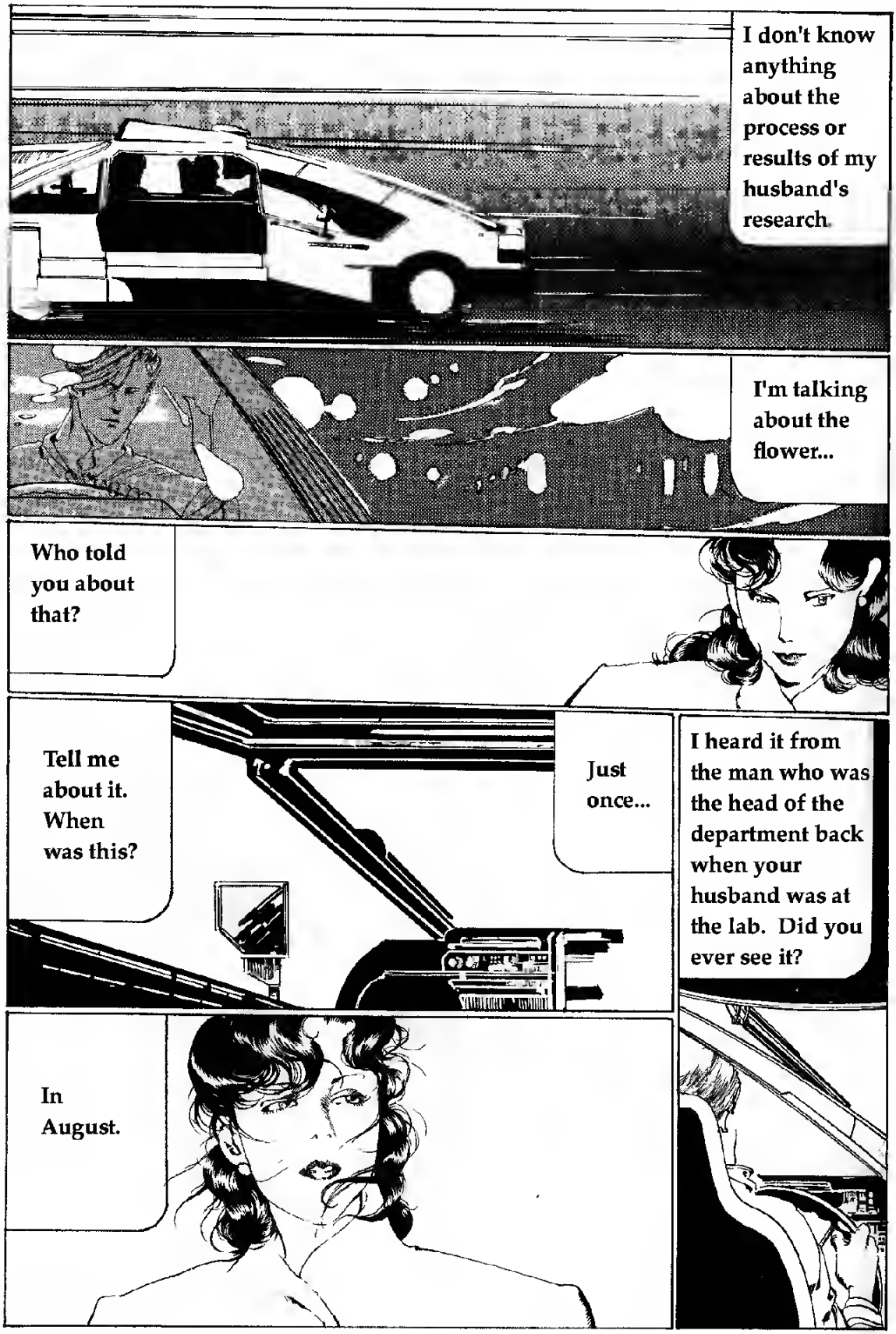

I'll look for your husband, but first I want to have a little chat with you.
You never mentioned it, but you must know about the *Lilith emeteos*. And on top of that...
You wanted me more for muscle than for detecting.

BRRR..
I've already told you all that I know, and you...
Hello?
beep
You could say that! I've just about lost my nerve. Seriously, you've got to listen to me.
Don? What is it? You sound nervous...
Doug? I called to warn you: you've got to drop this case!

Impossible! I shot her myself five years ago!
Suzie Wong is alive!
There's no mistake! It was in the crowd at Central Station... I'm positive I saw her!

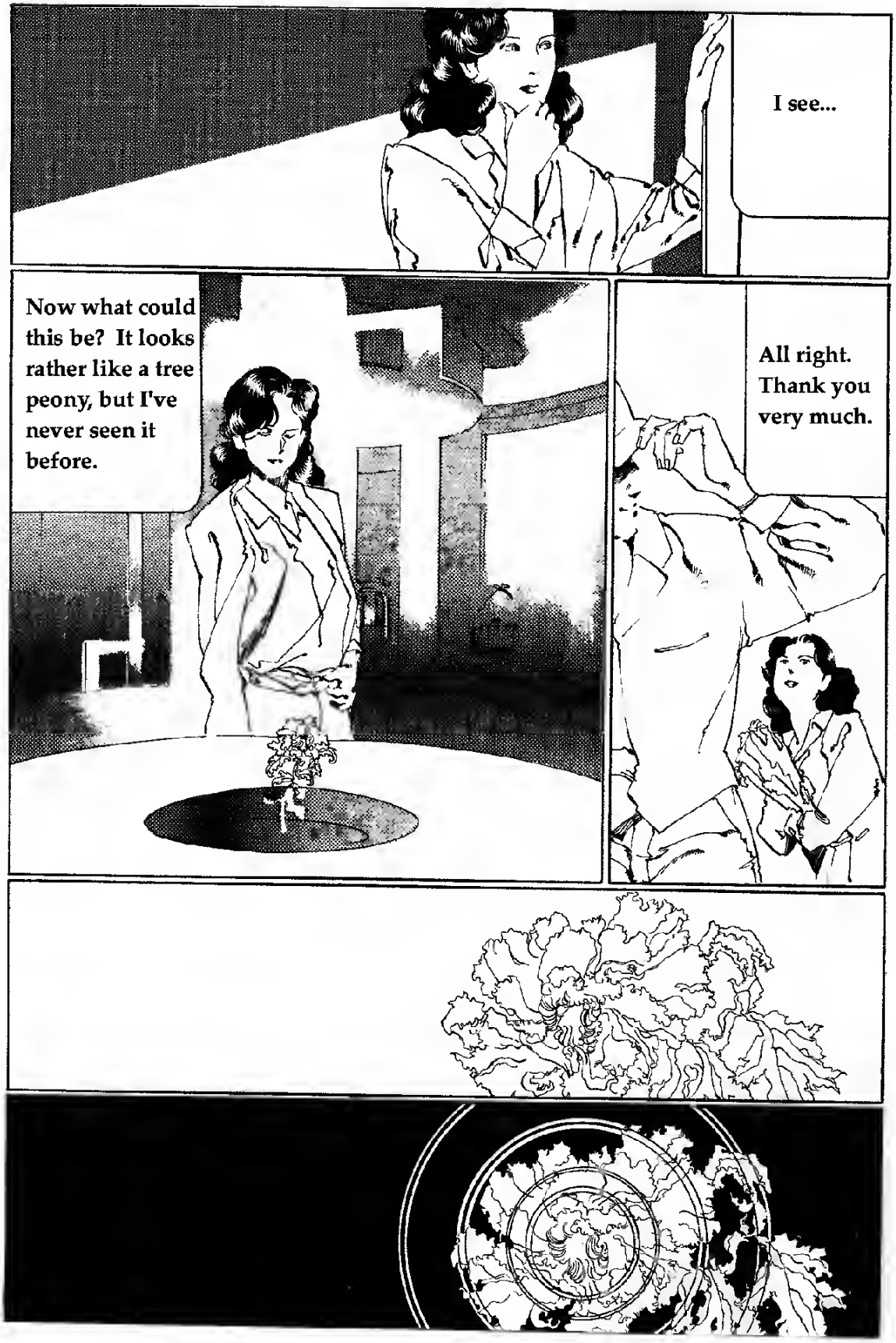
Mention my name: the owner has a gun. I'll be there in fifteen minutes.
Go out to Connaught Road. Before you get to the bus terminal, there's that nightclub we went to together. Wait for me there.
Ok.
I'm familiar with them.
Will you come with me? How are you with guns?
clunk
There's a chance this could get dangerous.
But why?
If things go to hell, I'd like you to be able to protect yourself.

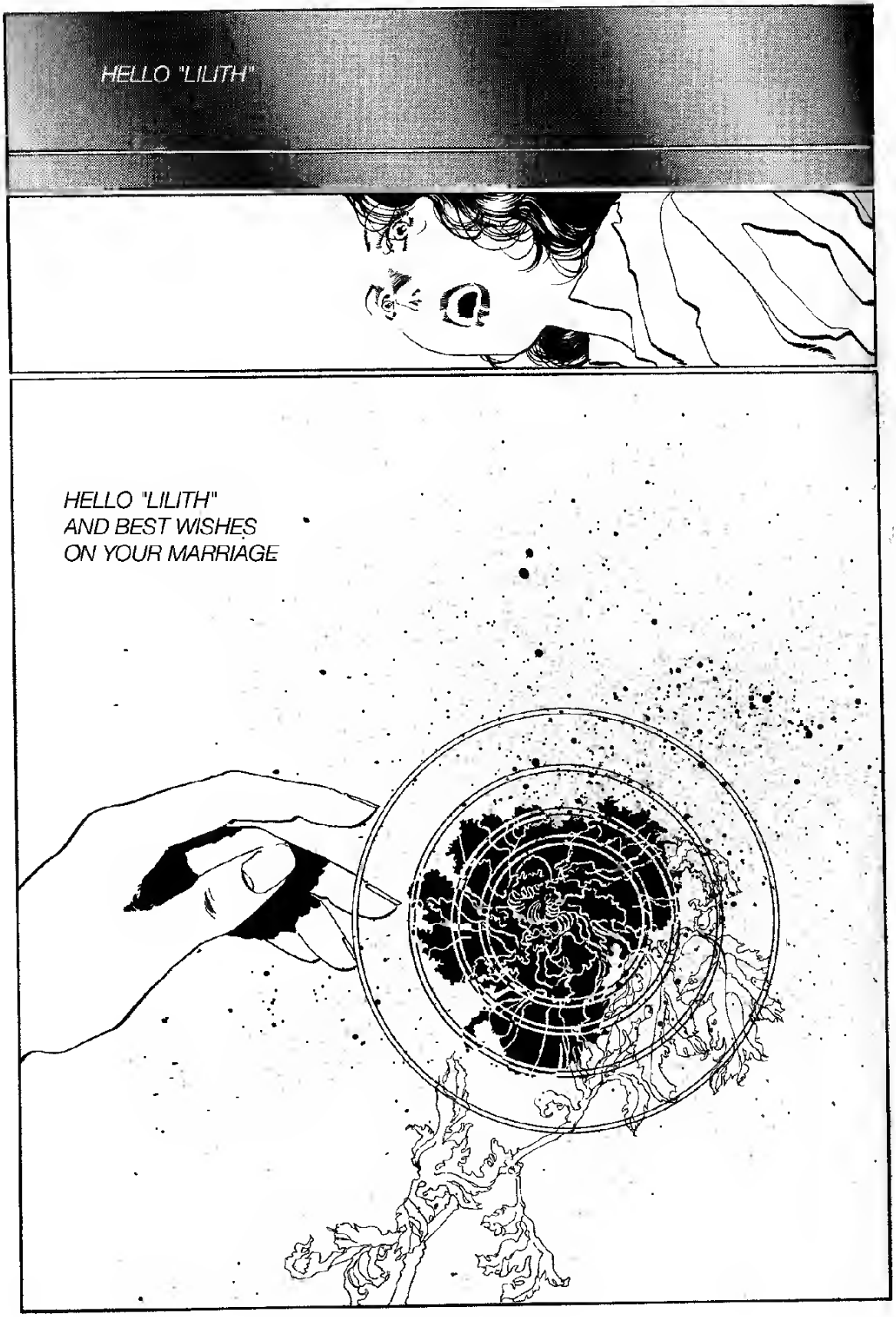

Tell me
everything
you know
about
Lilith emeteos.


I don't know anything about the process or results of my husband's research.
I'm talking about the flower...
Who told you about that?
Tell me about it. When was this?
Just once...
I heard it from the man who was the head of the department back when your husband was at the lab. Did you ever see it?
In August.

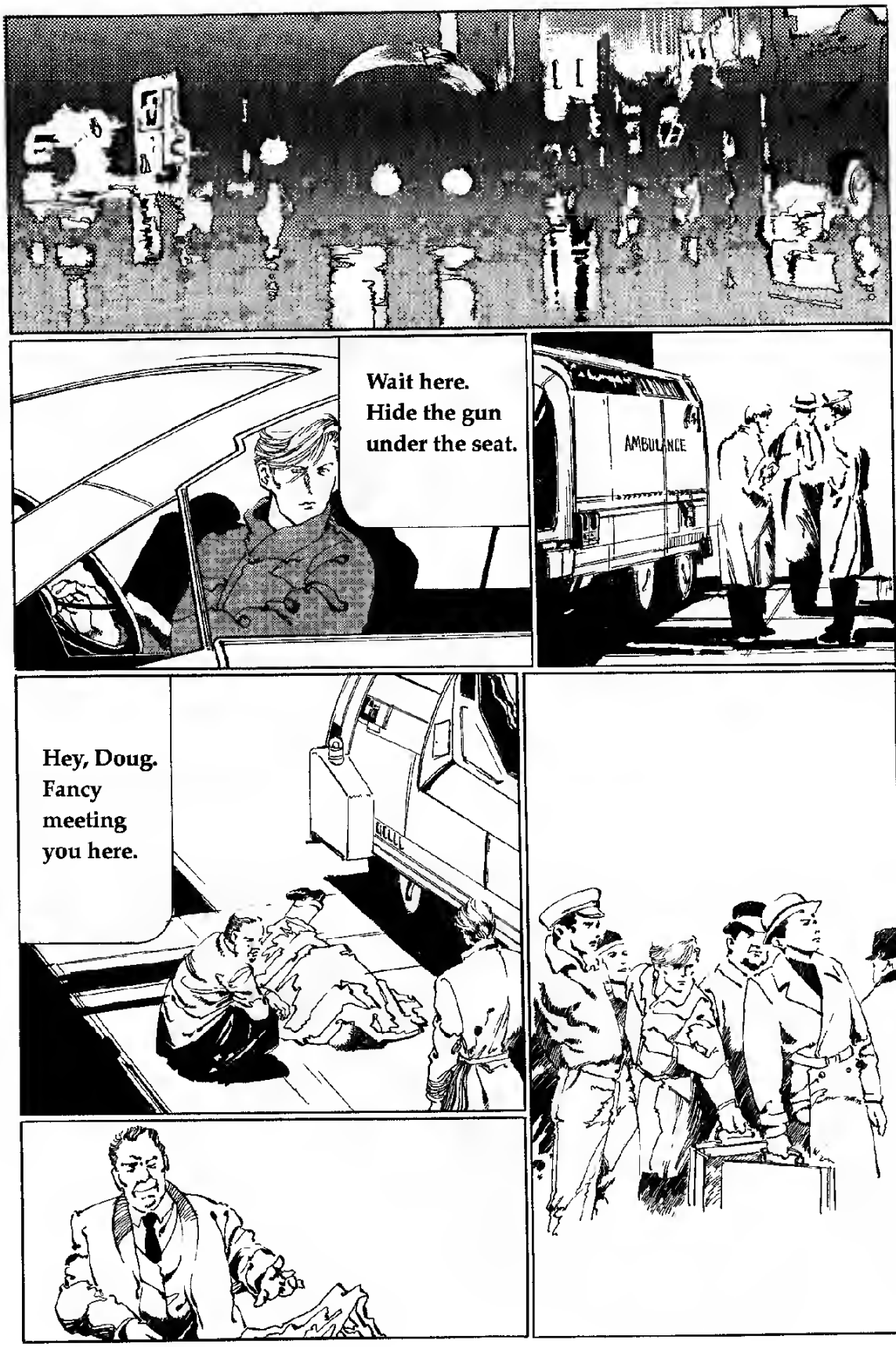
That morning, a flower arrived from Brian.
It was the day before our wedding.

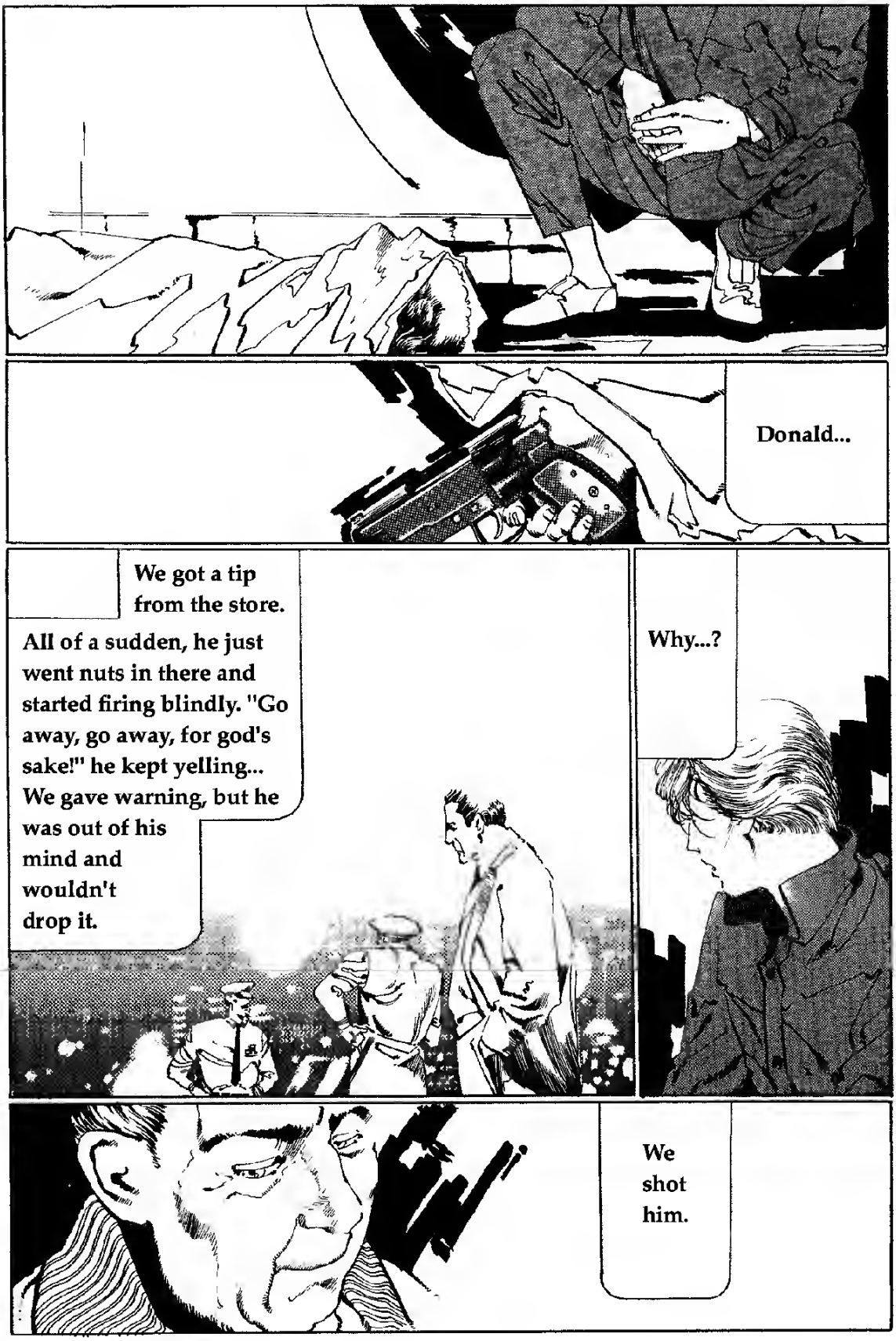
Who is it?
knock knock
I have a delivery from a Mr. Brian Emmett.
Yes?
Lilith Brun-dage...?
I don't know anything about any message. I was just told to give it to you as is.
What's the message?


I see...
Now what could this be? It looks rather like a tree peony, but I've never seen it before.
All right. Thank you very much.


HELLO "LILITH"
HELLO "LILITH"
AND BEST WISHES
ON YOUR MARRIAGE

The consonants were a bit muddy, but I could pick out the words quite clearly.
The faint trill gradually resolved itself into an audible pattern.
At first, it was just a vibration at the edge of my hearing.
The flower talked...?
It wouldn't be impossible, if the flower were sentient.
I see... But how did he get a flower to store language?
He had discovered a plant that caused the calyx to vibrate during the pollination period, attracting insects. But without a pitch controller.

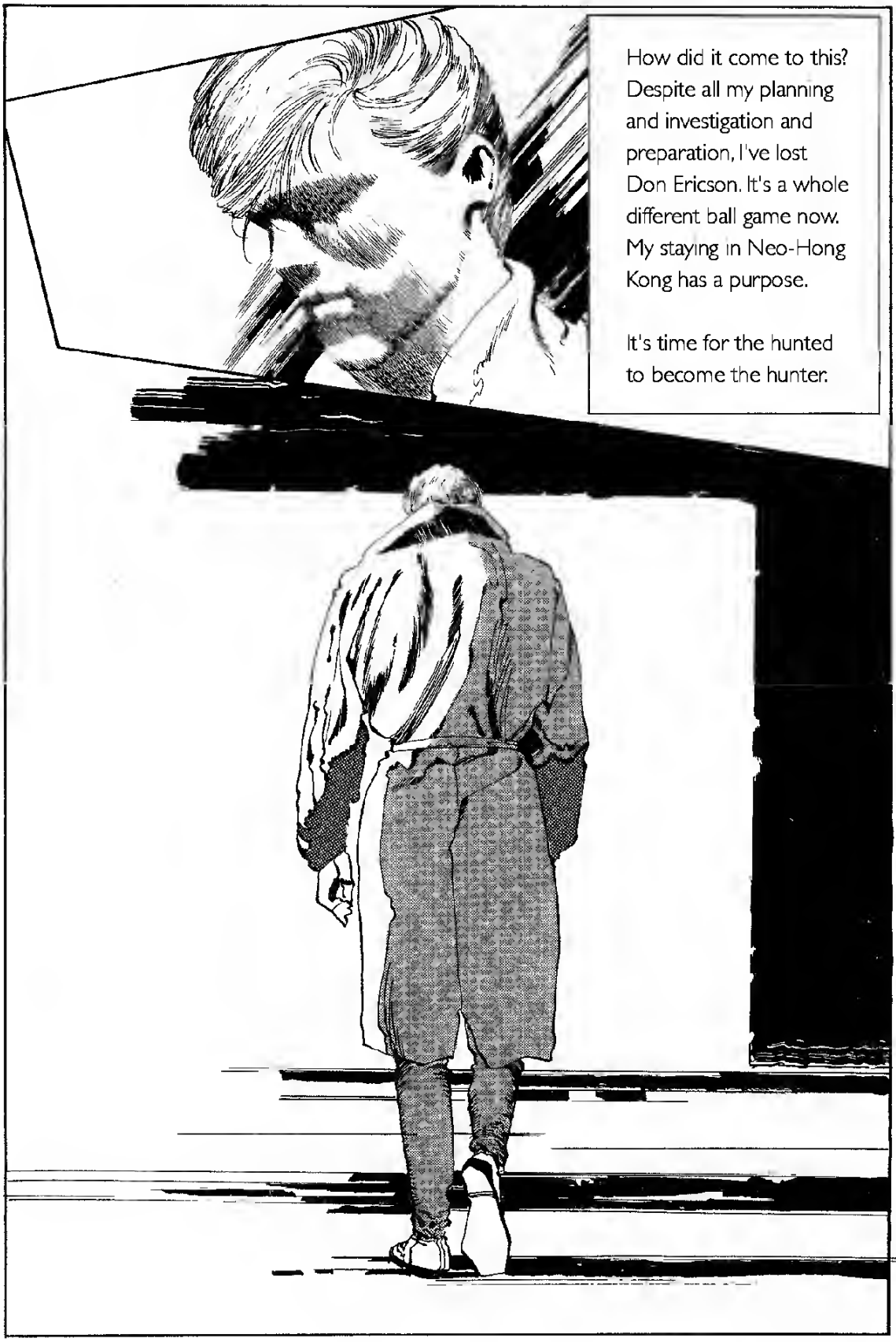

Wait here. Hide the gun under the seat.
AMBULANCE
Hey, Doug. Fancy meeting you here.

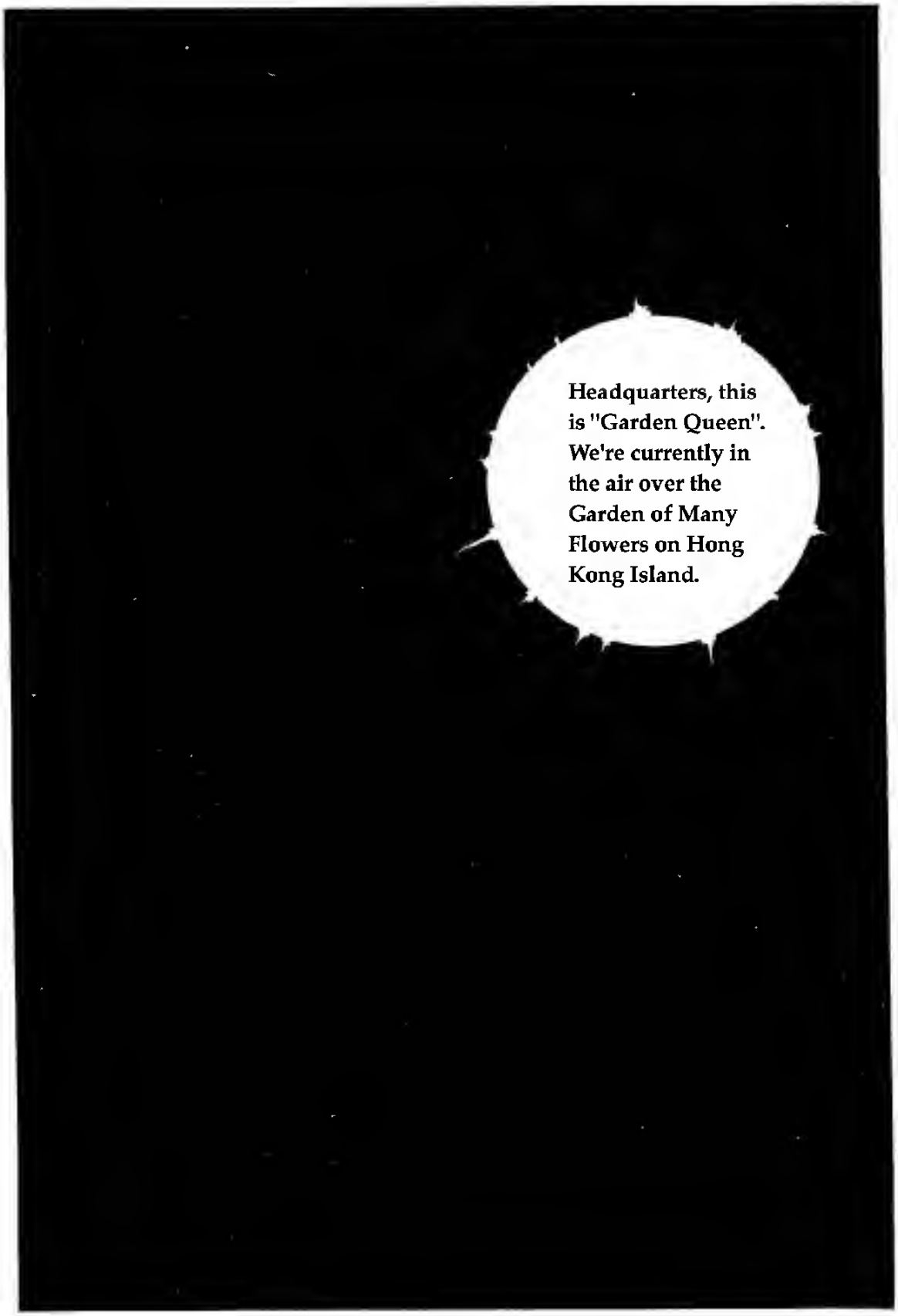

Donald...
We got a tip from the store.
All of a sudden, he just went nuts in there and started firing blindly. "Go away, go away, for god's sake!" he kept yelling... We gave warning, but he was out of his mind and wouldn't drop it.
Why...?
We shot him.

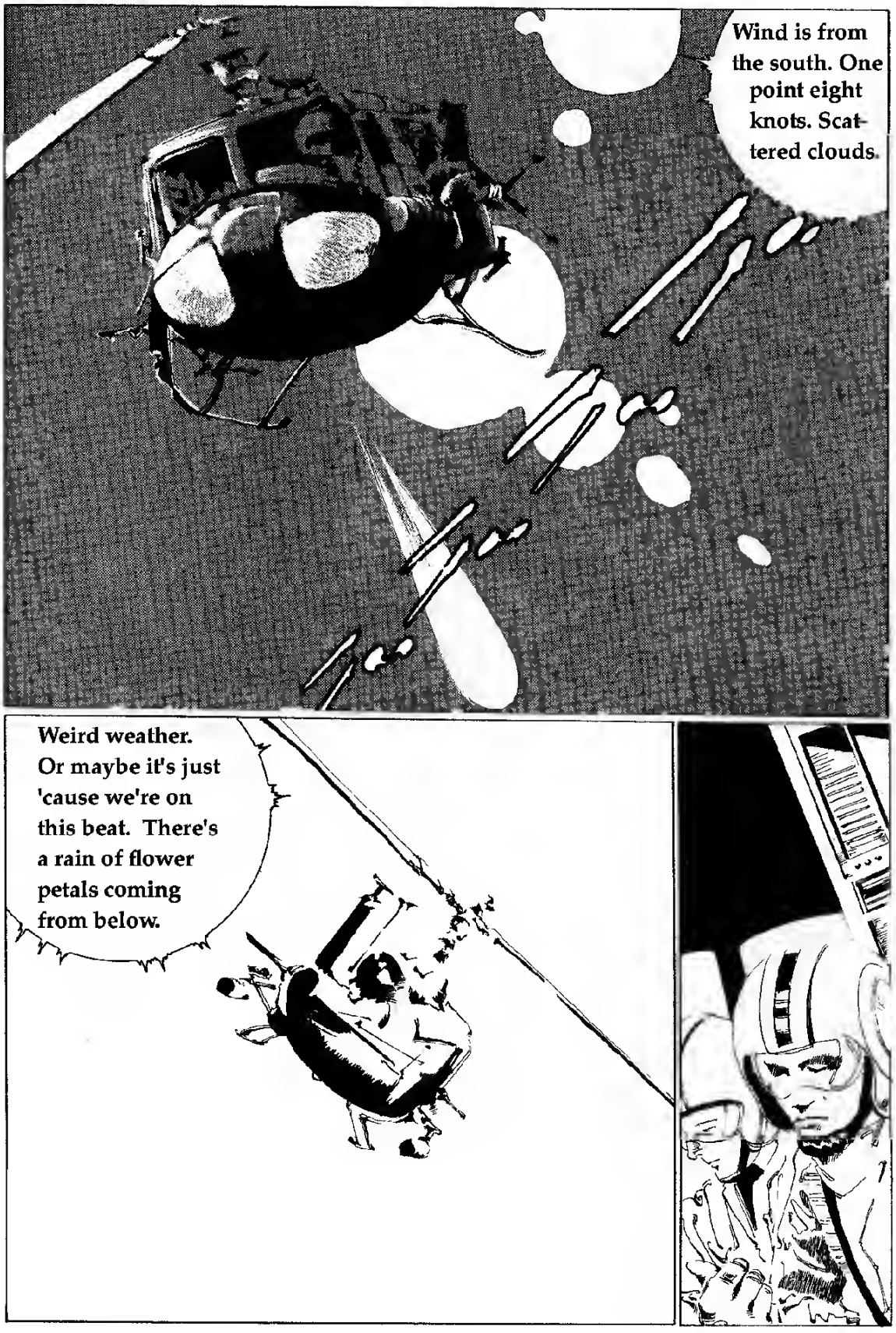
No, no, strictly on a voluntary basis...
Is that an order, Chief Bates?
Donald Ericson called you just before it happened, didn't he? You're a material witness; I'm going to need you to come down to the station.
Yeah.
You picked up a fare while you were on the way to see somebody?
A customer. She wants to go to the jetfoil pier.
Who's the woman?

And you'll let me go home?
Let her off here.
That all right?
Yeah... Fine by me...
I'm terribly sorry, Ma'am.

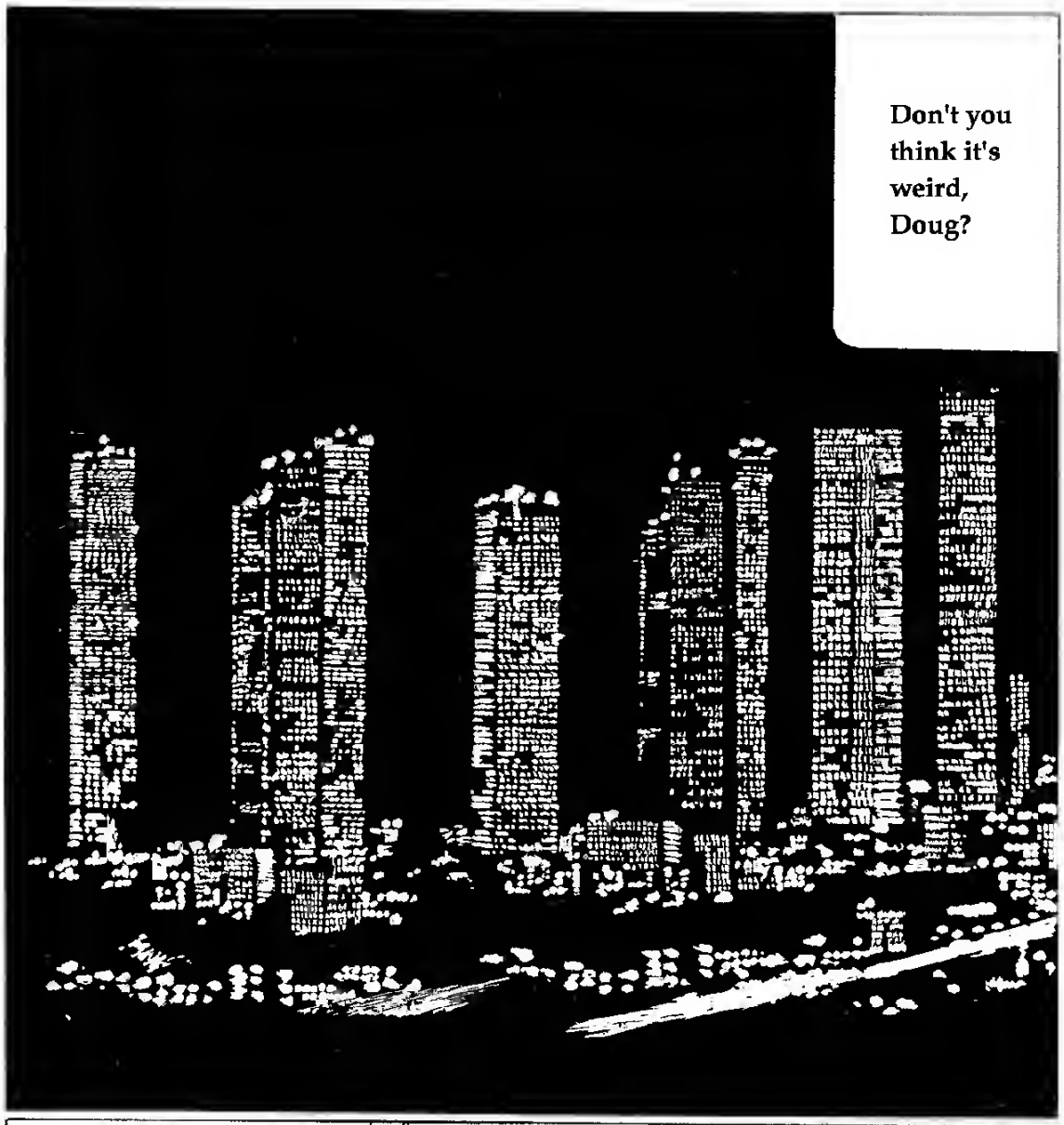
There's a bus terminal nearby; I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to go from there.
It looks like something has happened to an acquaintance of mine.
A little problem has come up.
Don's been killed. I'll call you later.

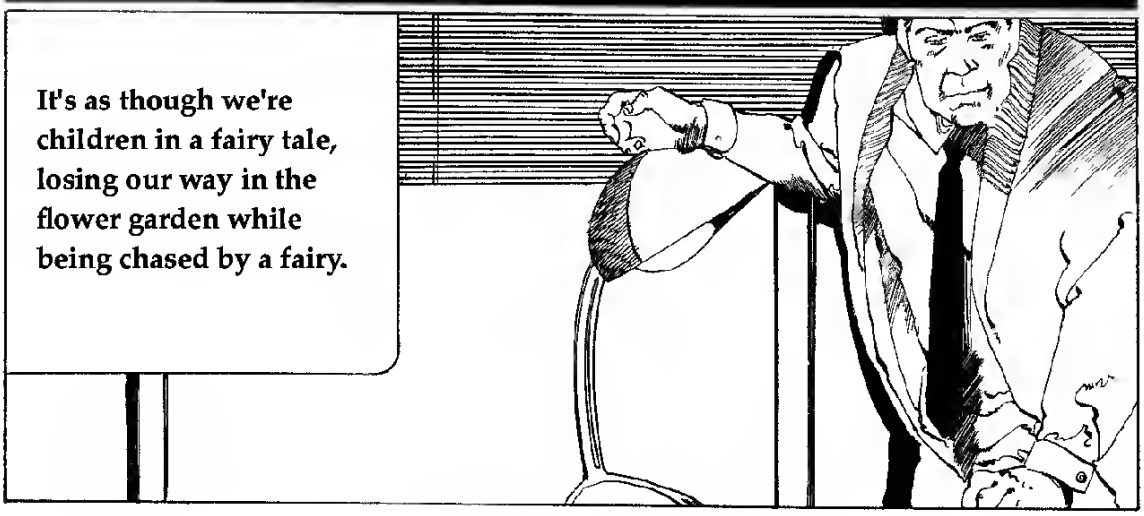

How did it come to this? Despite all my planning and investigation and preparation, I've lost Don Ericson. It's a whole different ball game now. My staying in Neo-Hong Kong has a purpose.
It's time for the hunted to become the hunter.


Headquarters, this is "Garden Queen". We're currently in the air over the Garden of Many Flowers on Hong Kong Island.


Wind is from the south. One point eight knots. Scattered clouds.
Weird weather. Or maybe it's just 'cause we're on this beat. There's a rain of flower petals coming from below.

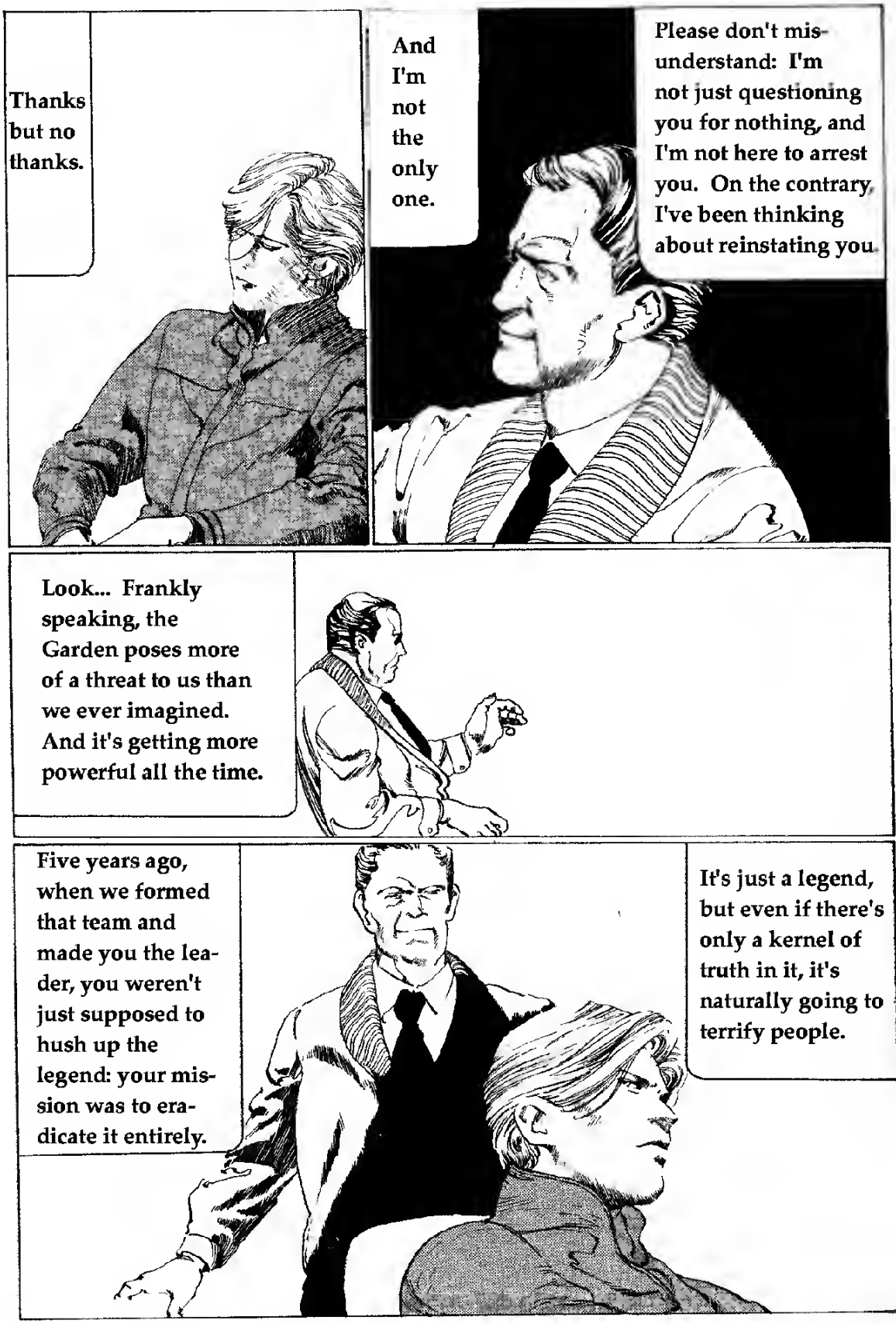
Flower petals?
We're going to take her lower to investigate.
That's strange. I don't see any atmospheric phenomena on the monitor.
Roger!
Be careful. That's Garden airspace.
whup-whup-whup-whup


Don't you think it's weird, Doug?

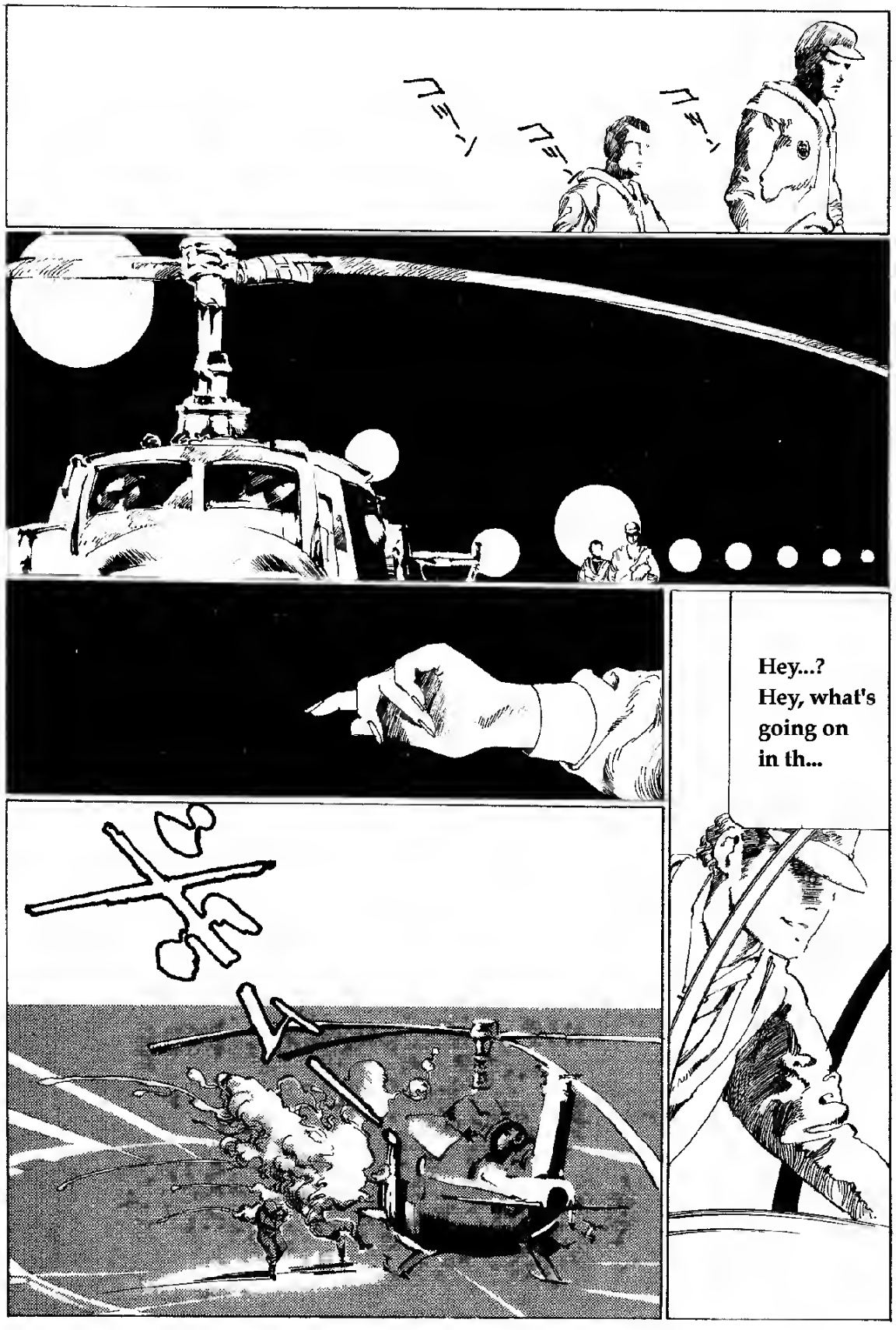

It's as though we're children in a fairy tale, losing our way in the flower garden while being chased by a fairy.

I told you: we had no choice.
Only it's all real. Don's dead.
Five years ago, I ended up in handcuffs, but if it hadn't been Donald, I think I would have killed whoever it was and fled. Maybe even if it was you.
Dangerous words, my friend...

Garden Queen is back, but the crew hasn't gotten out. There was no response to our landing instructions either.
What?
That's odd...
You're right, that *is* strange.

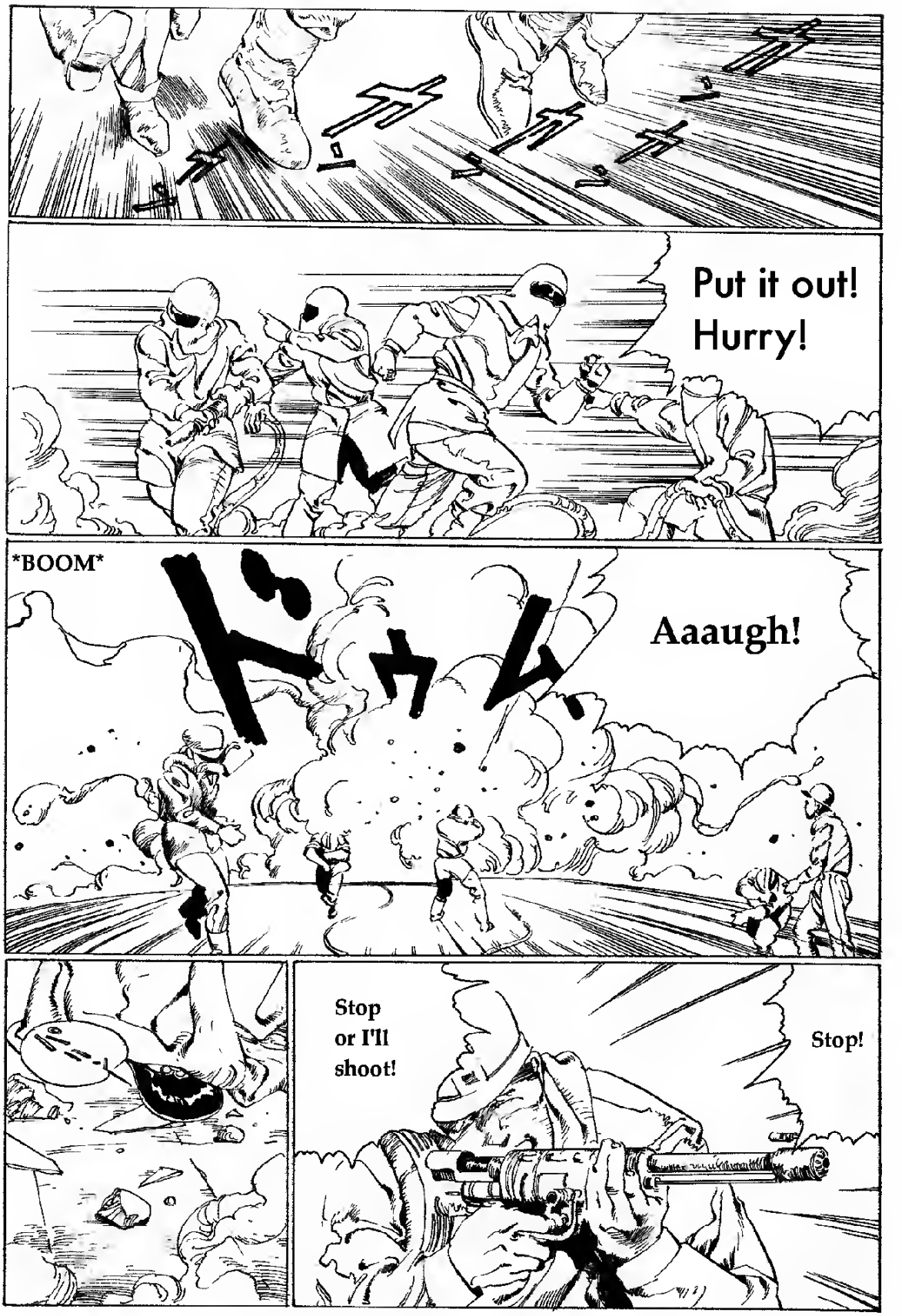

Thanks but no thanks.
And I'm not the only one.
Please don't misunderstand: I'm not just questioning you for nothing, and I'm not here to arrest you. On the contrary, I've been thinking about reinstating you.
Look... Frankly speaking, the Garden poses more of a threat to us than we ever imagined. And it's getting more powerful all the time.
Five years ago, when we formed that team and made you the leader, you weren't just supposed to hush up the legend: your mission was to eradicate it entirely.
It's just a legend, but even if there's only a kernel of truth in it, it's naturally going to terrify people.

trudge trudge

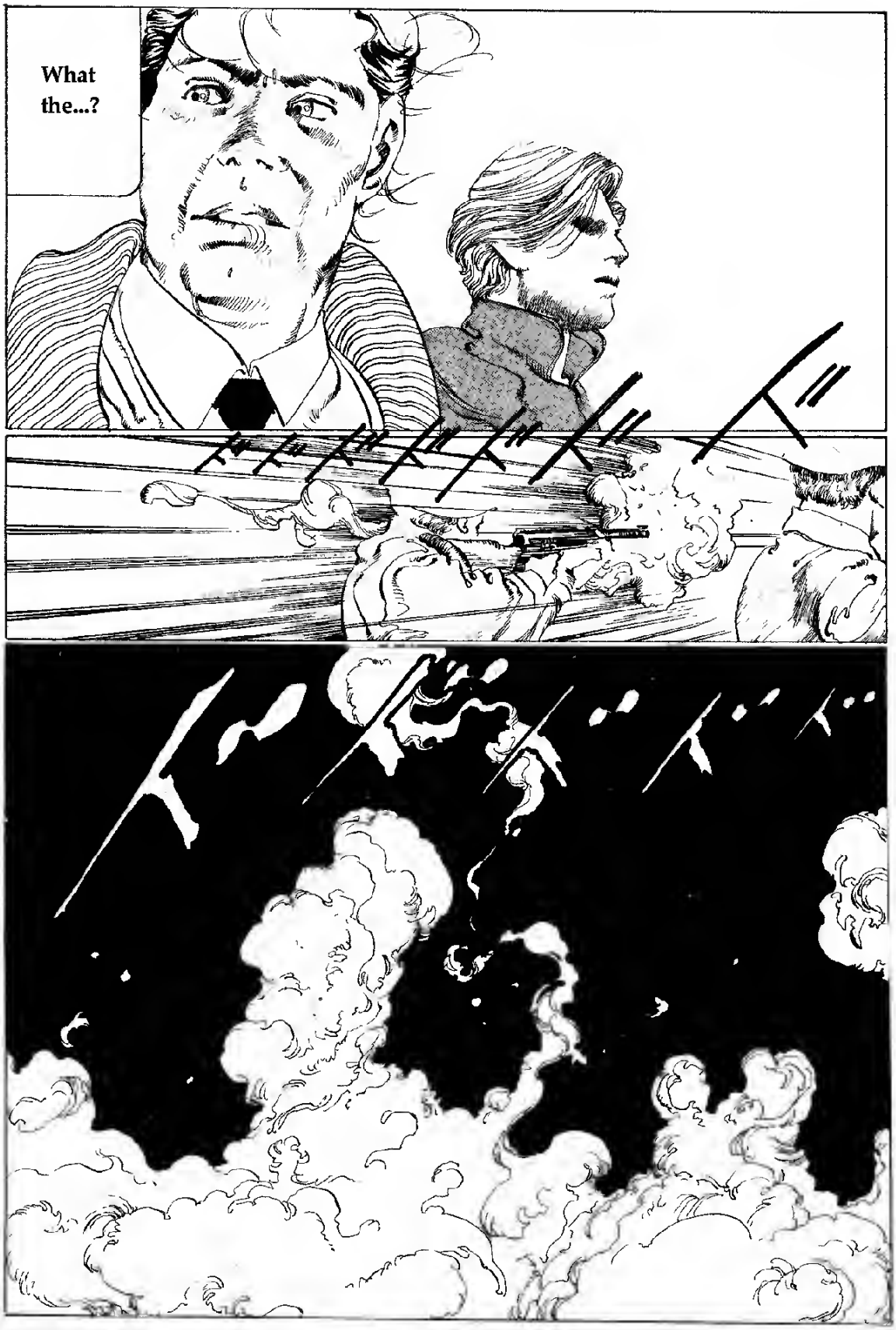


BOOM

Enter!
BZZZ
At twenty-one oh seven one of our helicopters returned from patrol, but, well...
What is it?
Par-don me, Sir.
?
rumble


slap slap
Put it out! Hurry!
BOOM
ドゥム
Aaaugh!
Stop or I'll shoot!
Stop!
crunch

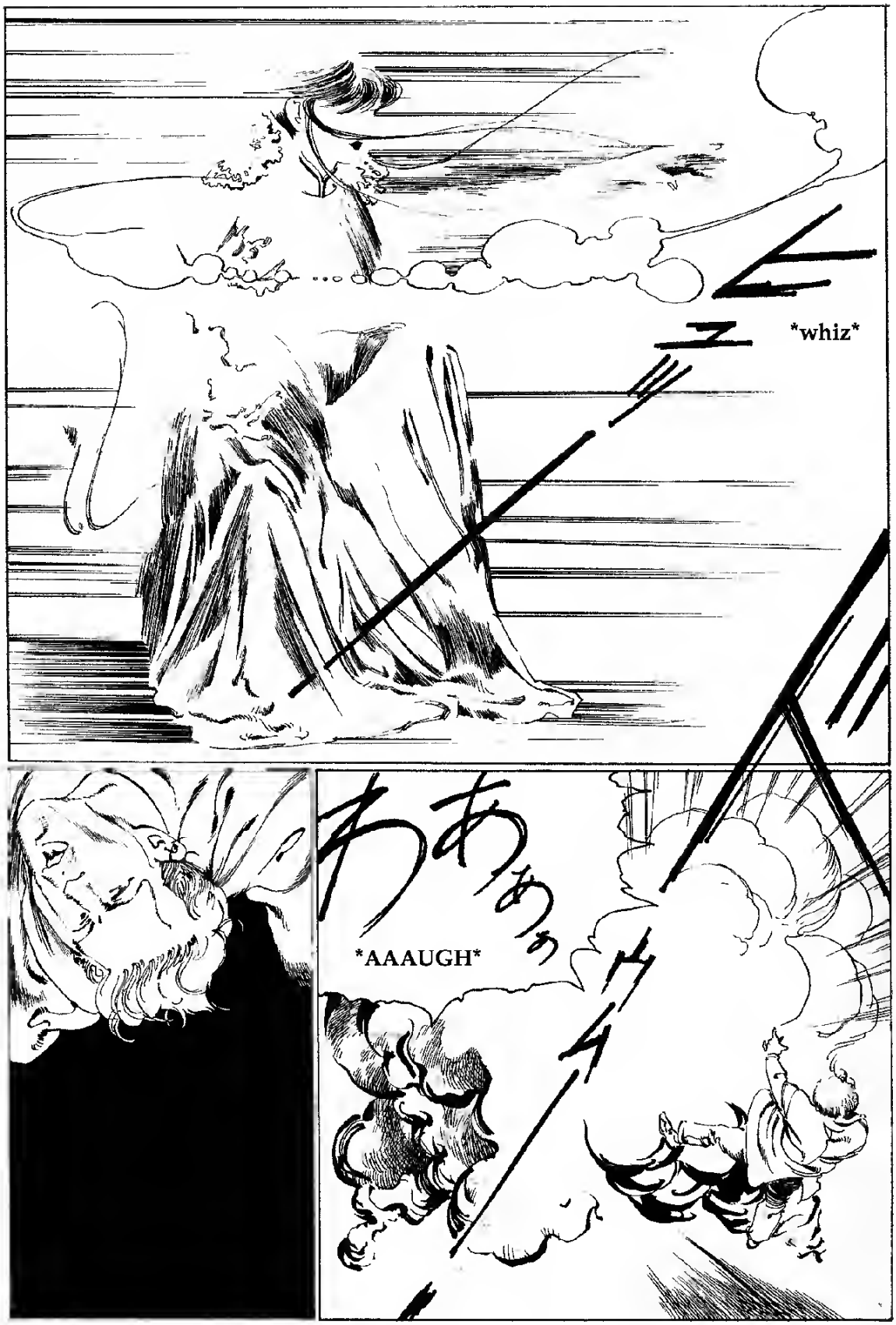
snap
clink


What the...?
blam blam blam blam

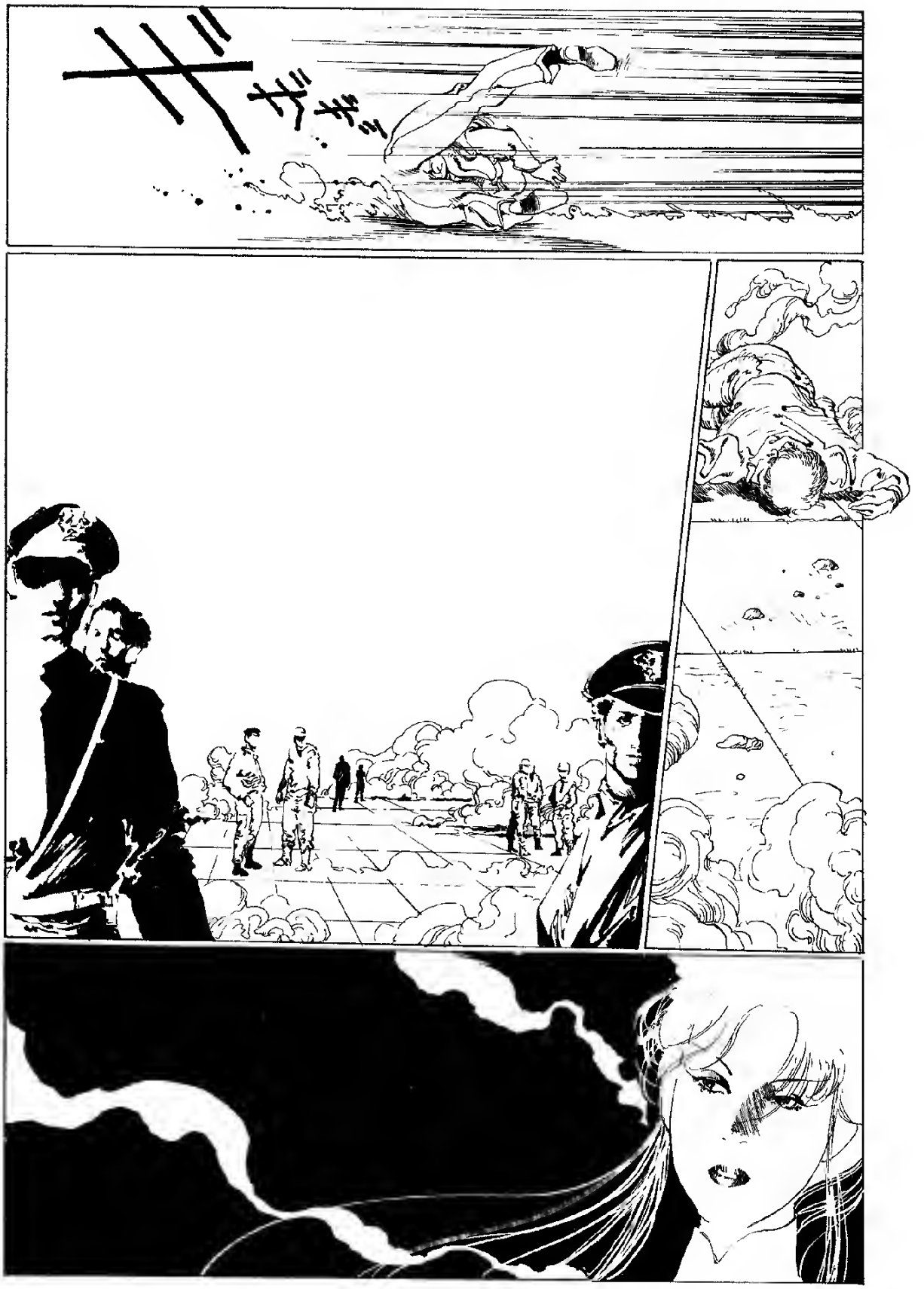
ka-BOOM

 rumble

ssssss
It... It came out of that unmanned helicopter!
That's all we know!
What the hell *is* that?


whiz
AAAUGH
BOOOOM

sliiiide



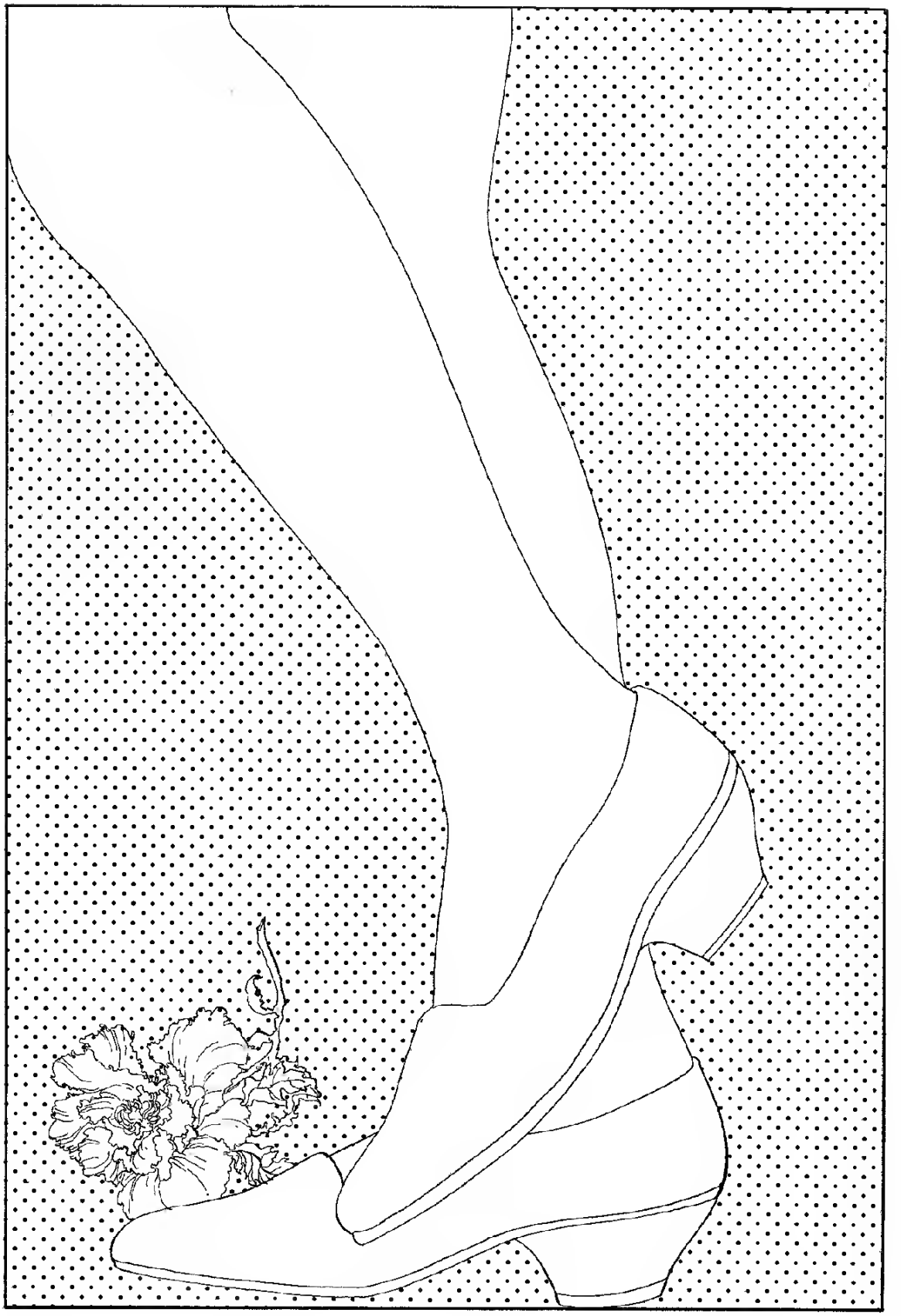
See if you can find out what those fireball she's throwing are made of.
ch-chk

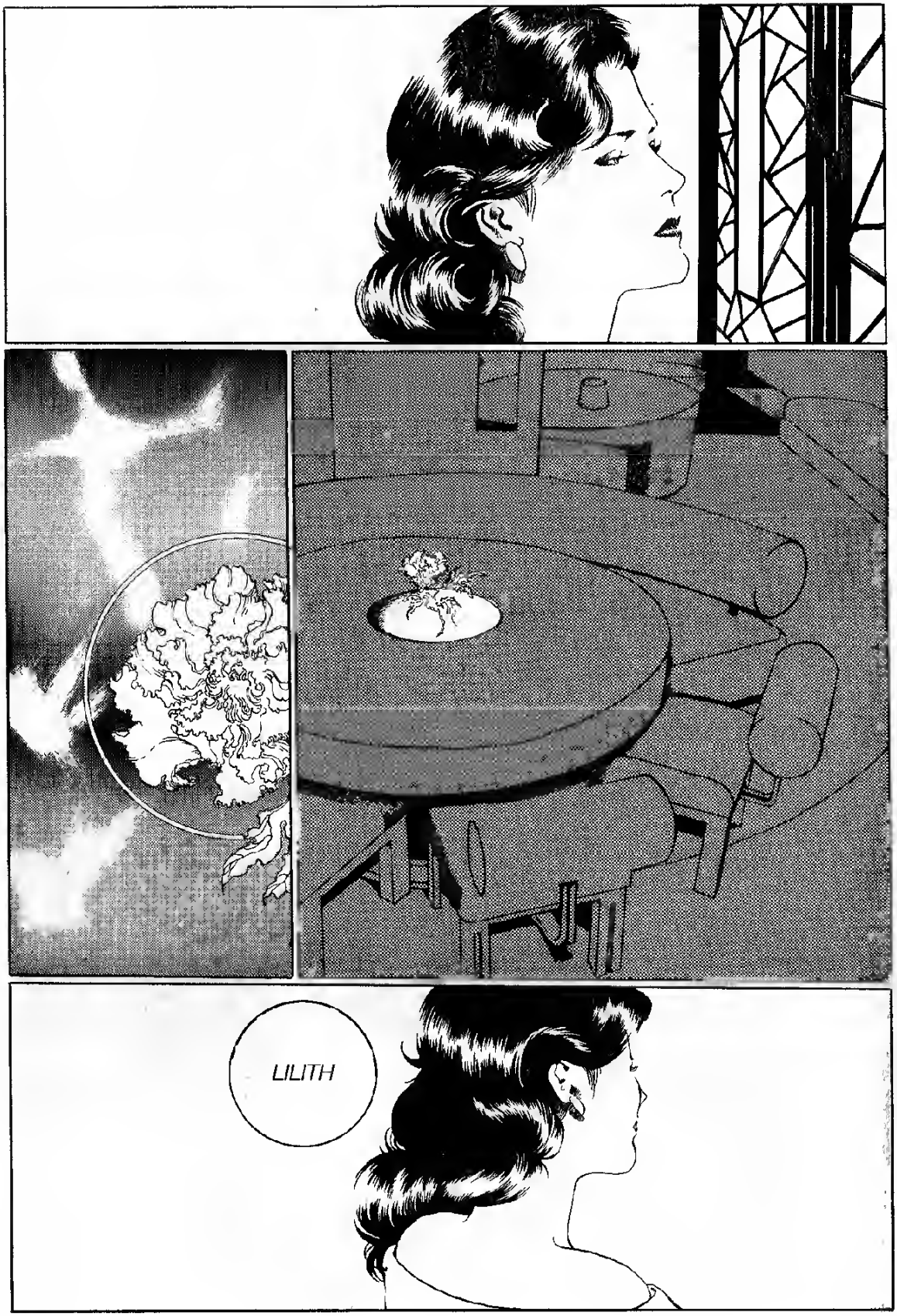
whiz

BOOM

YOU ARE THE ONE WHO SHOT ME...?
No, not I.

You are the one who killed Suzie Wong.




LILITH

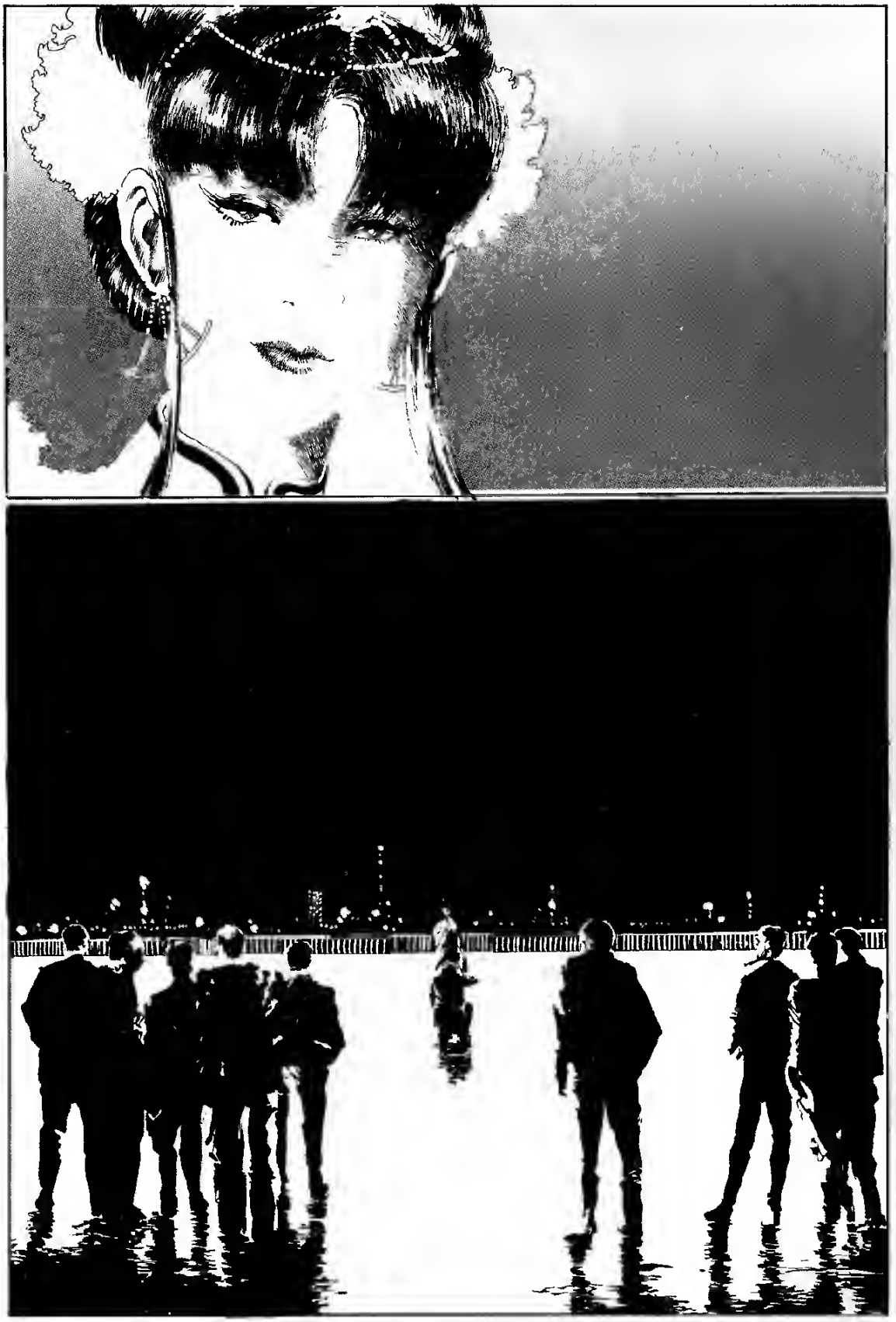
You're... a flower?
LILITH
LILITH... WILL YOU MEET BRIAN?

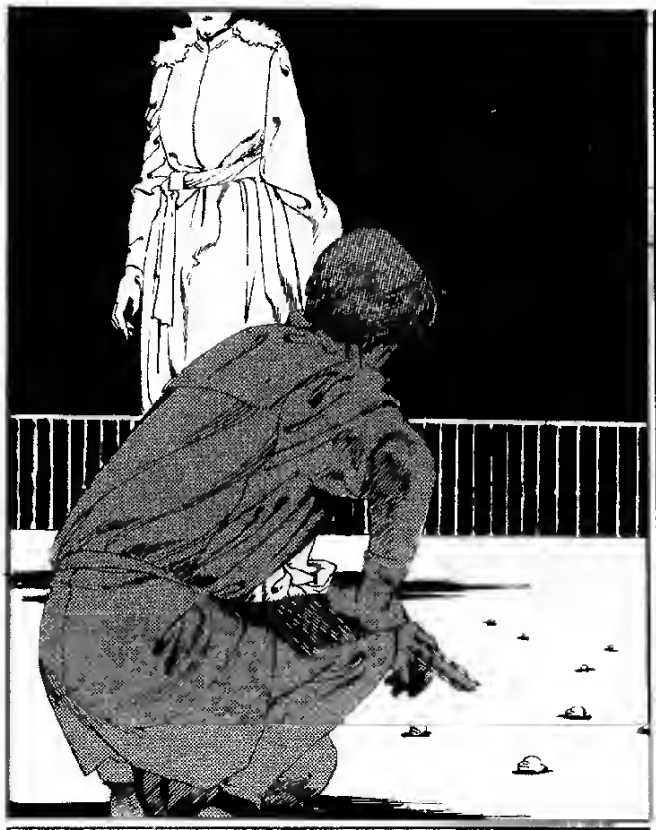
LISTEN...
Yes...
Yes!

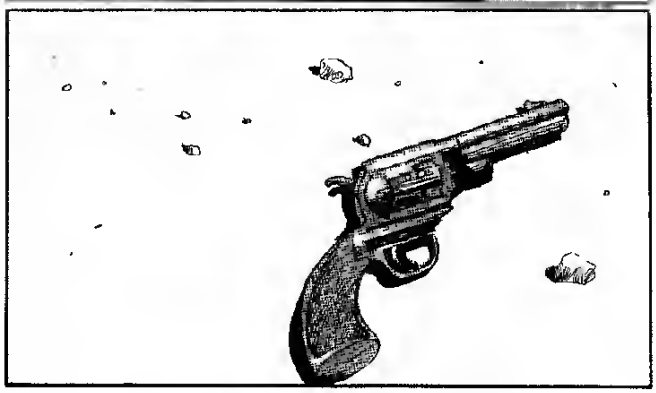
GO RIGHT AT THE NEXT LIGHT...
AT THE TOP OF THE HILL, GO LEFT ALONG THE RIVER

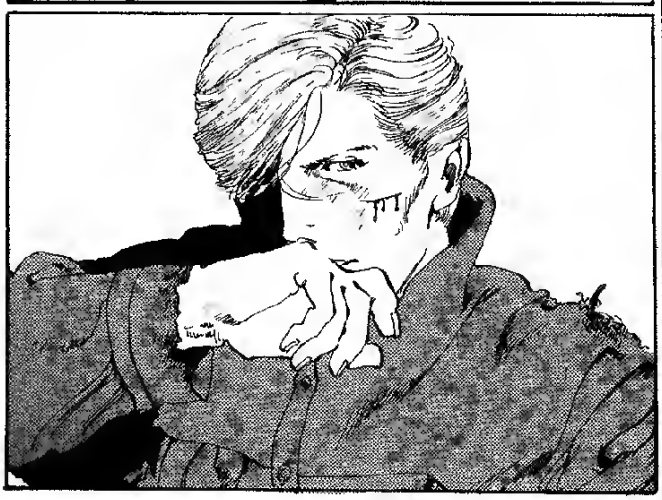
BOOM

crackle





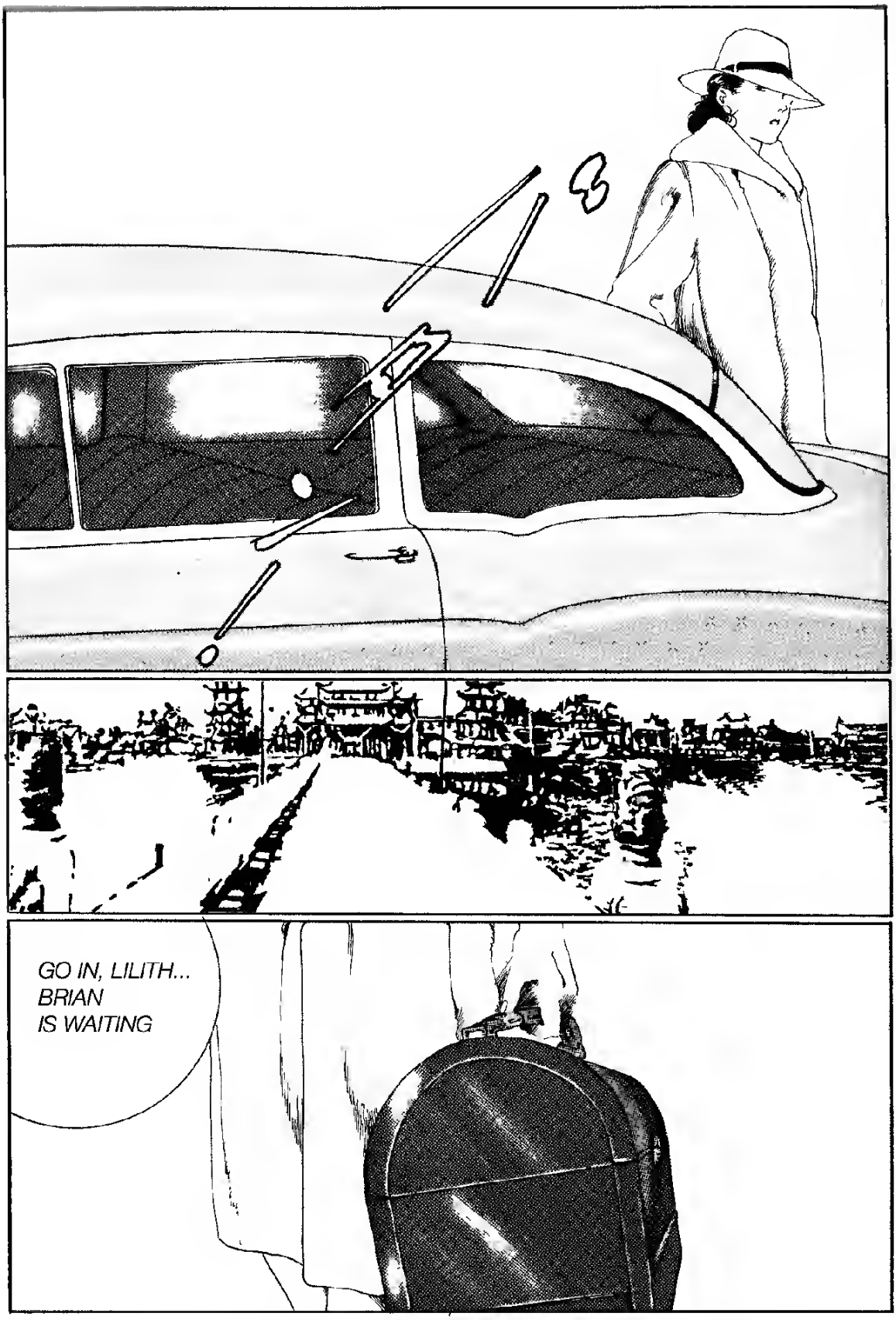




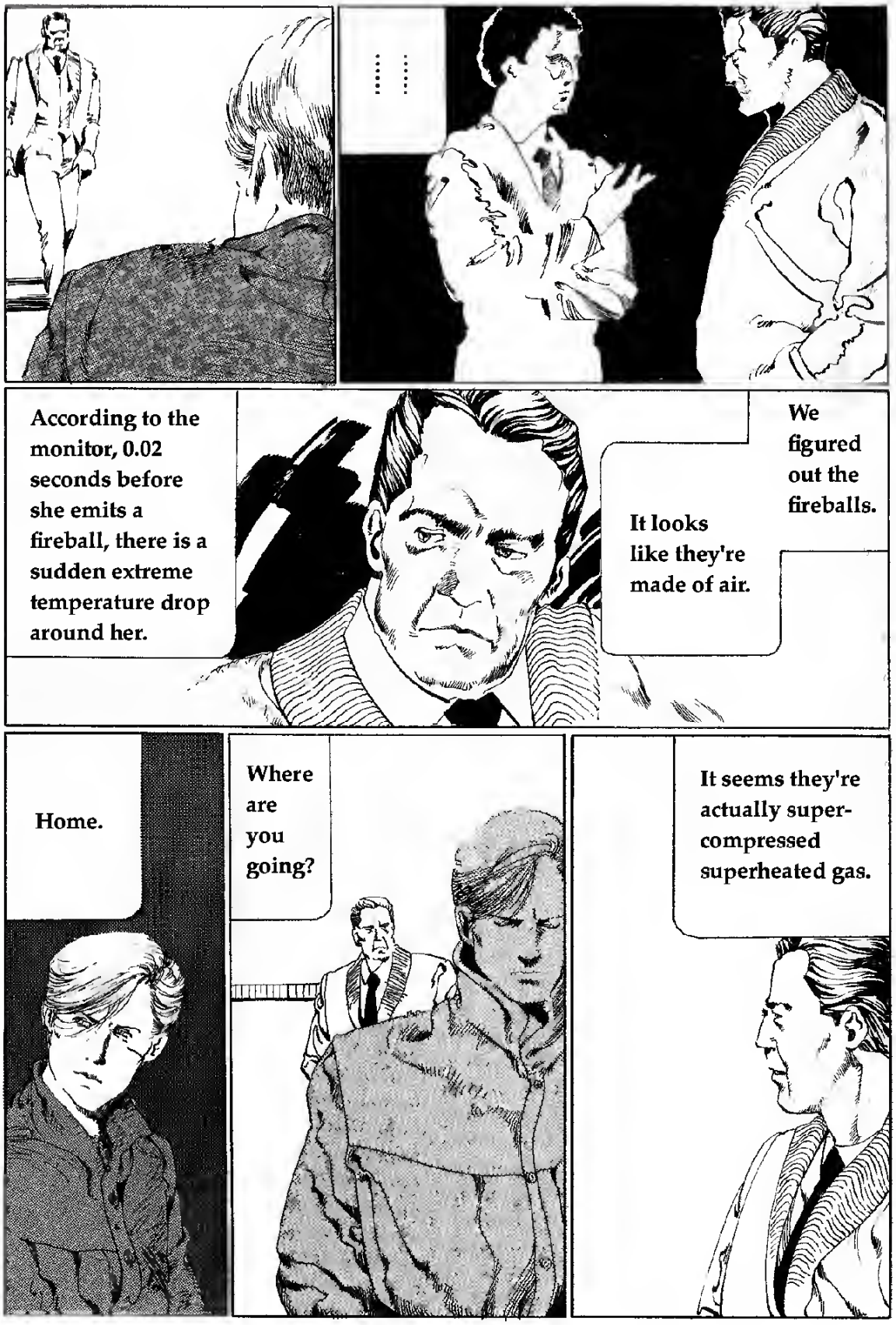
whssh

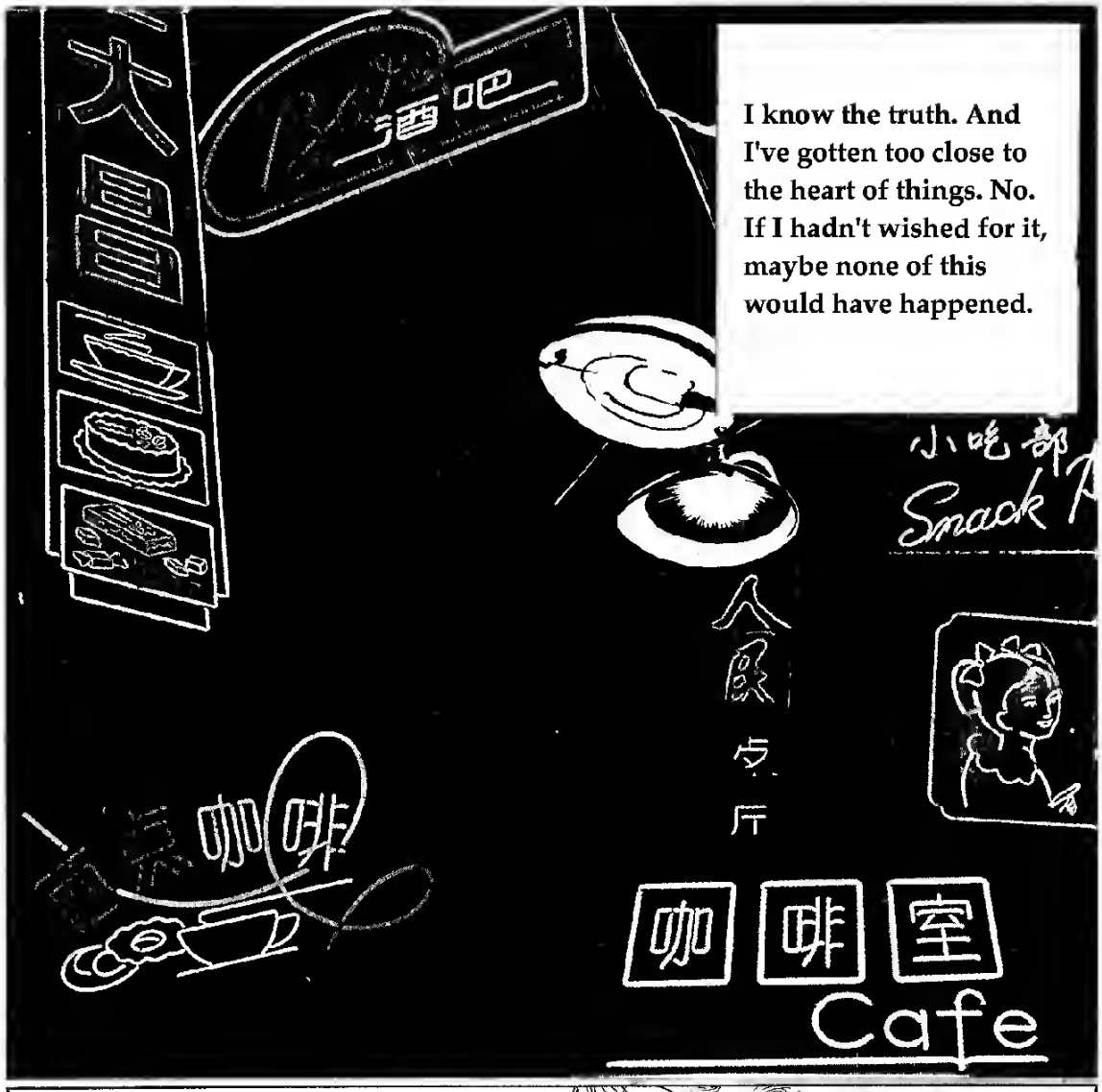
BOOOOM

ssssss

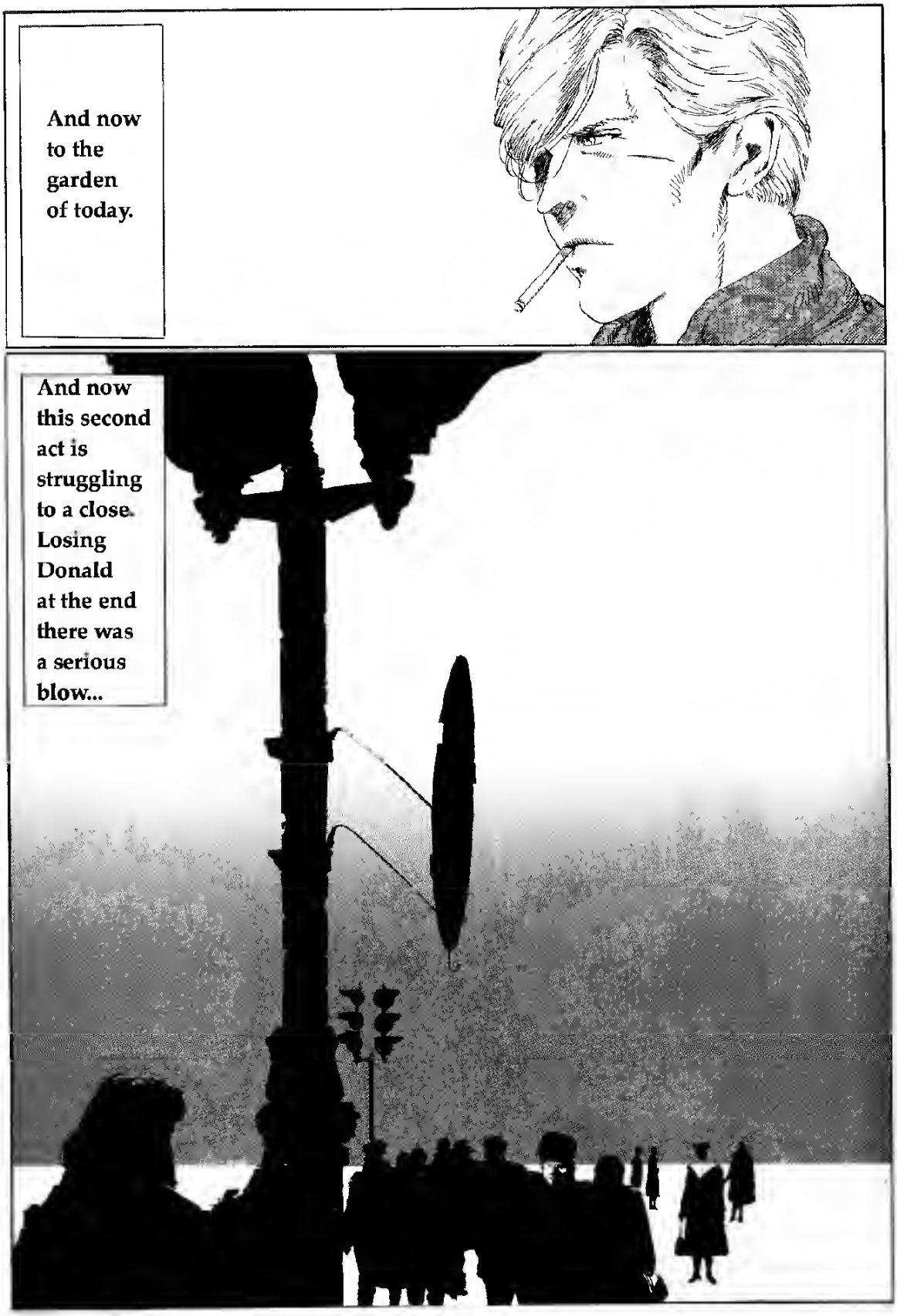

slam
GO IN, LILITH...
BRIAN
IS WAITING

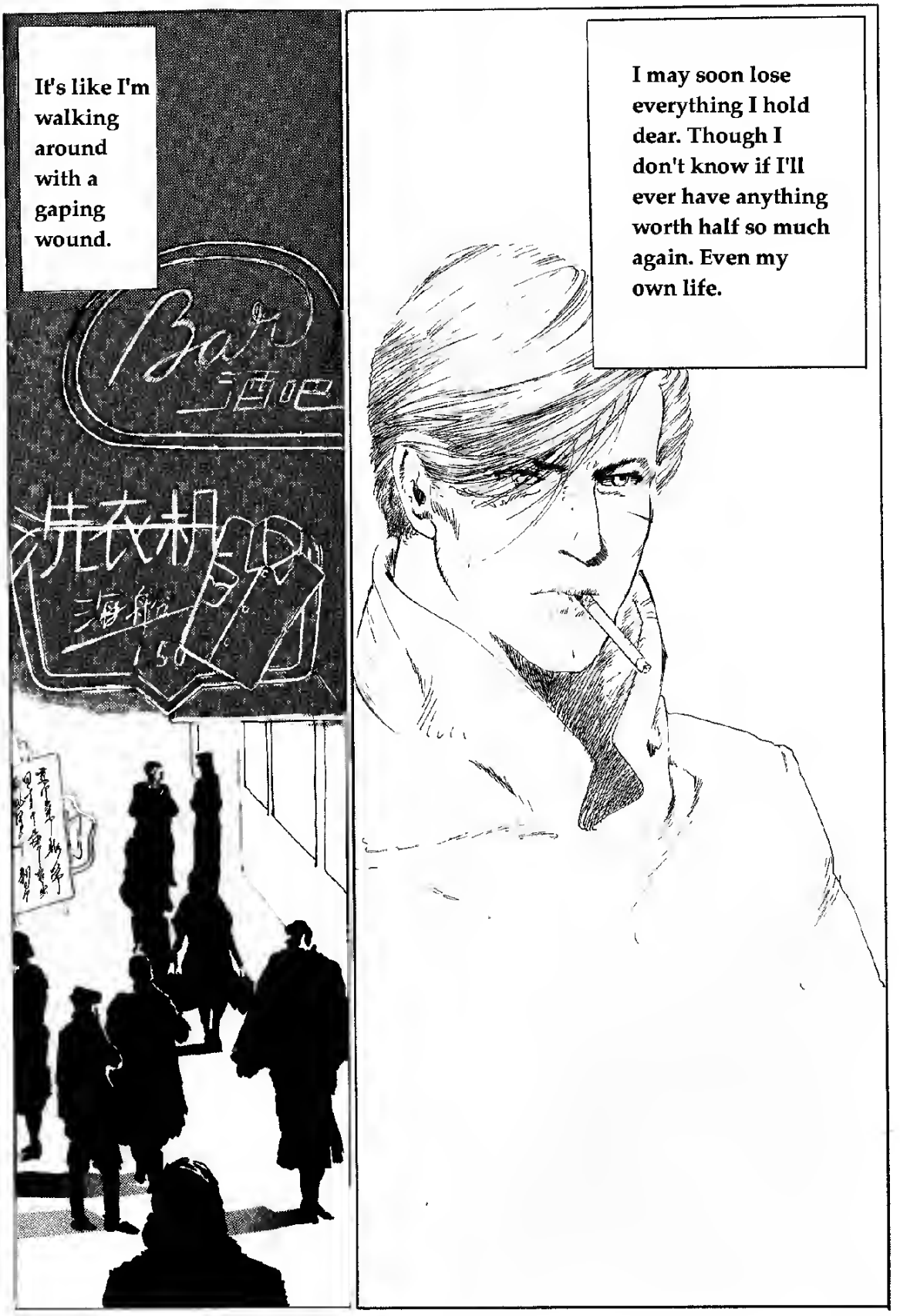
The flower's spirit. Though she's not so pretty now, is she?
Who in the hell was that?
Chief!

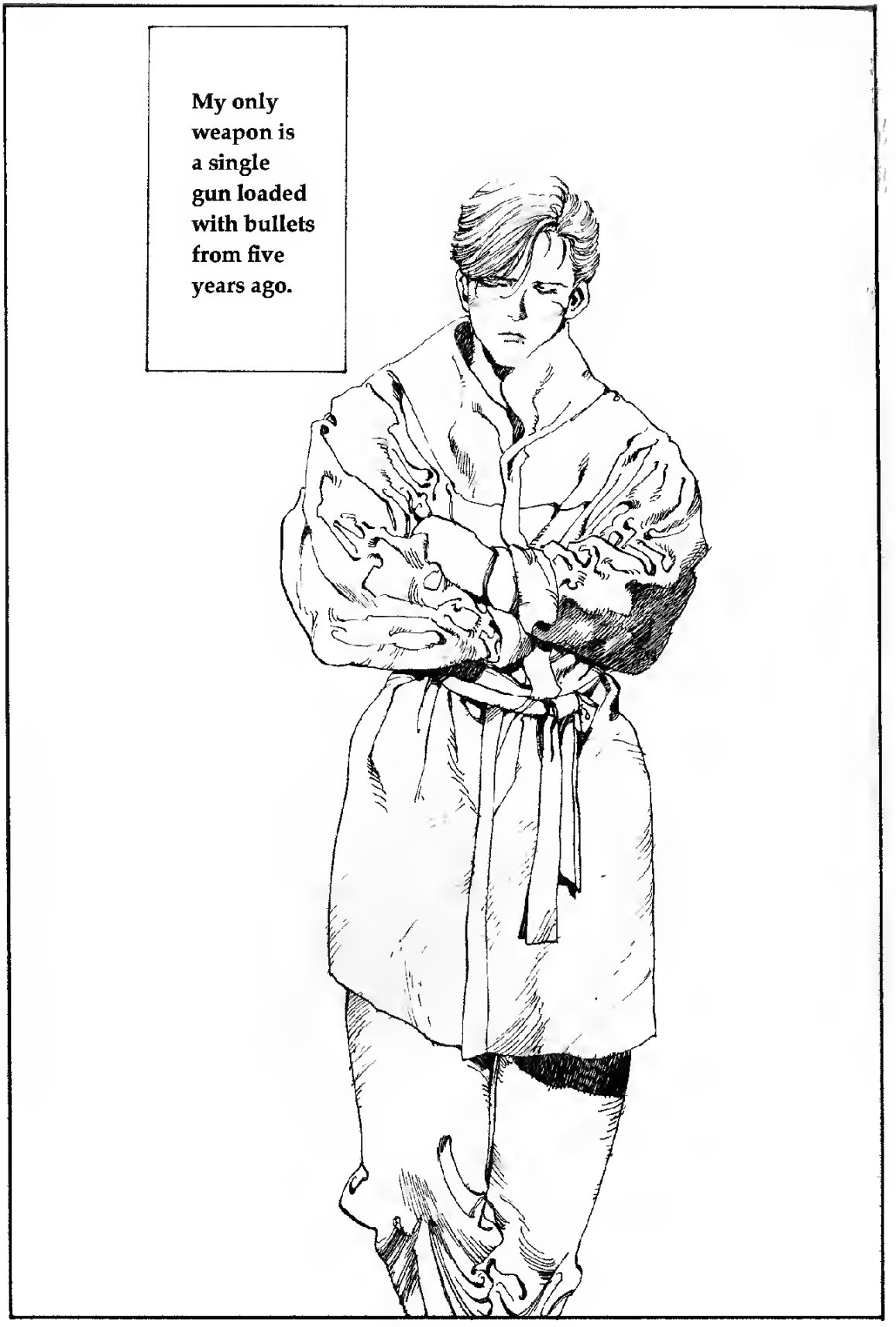

.....
According to the monitor, 0.02 seconds before she emits a fireball, there is a sudden extreme temperature drop around her.
We figured out the fireballs.
It looks like they're made of air.
Home.
Where are you going?
It seems they're actually super-compressed superheated gas.


I know the truth. And I've gotten too close to the heart of things. No. If I hadn't wished for it, maybe none of this would have happened.
酒吧
小吃部
Snack
咖啡
咖啡室
Cafe

I had to go. First to the garden of five years ago.


And now to the garden of today.
And now this second act is struggling to a close. Losing Donald at the end there was a serious blow...

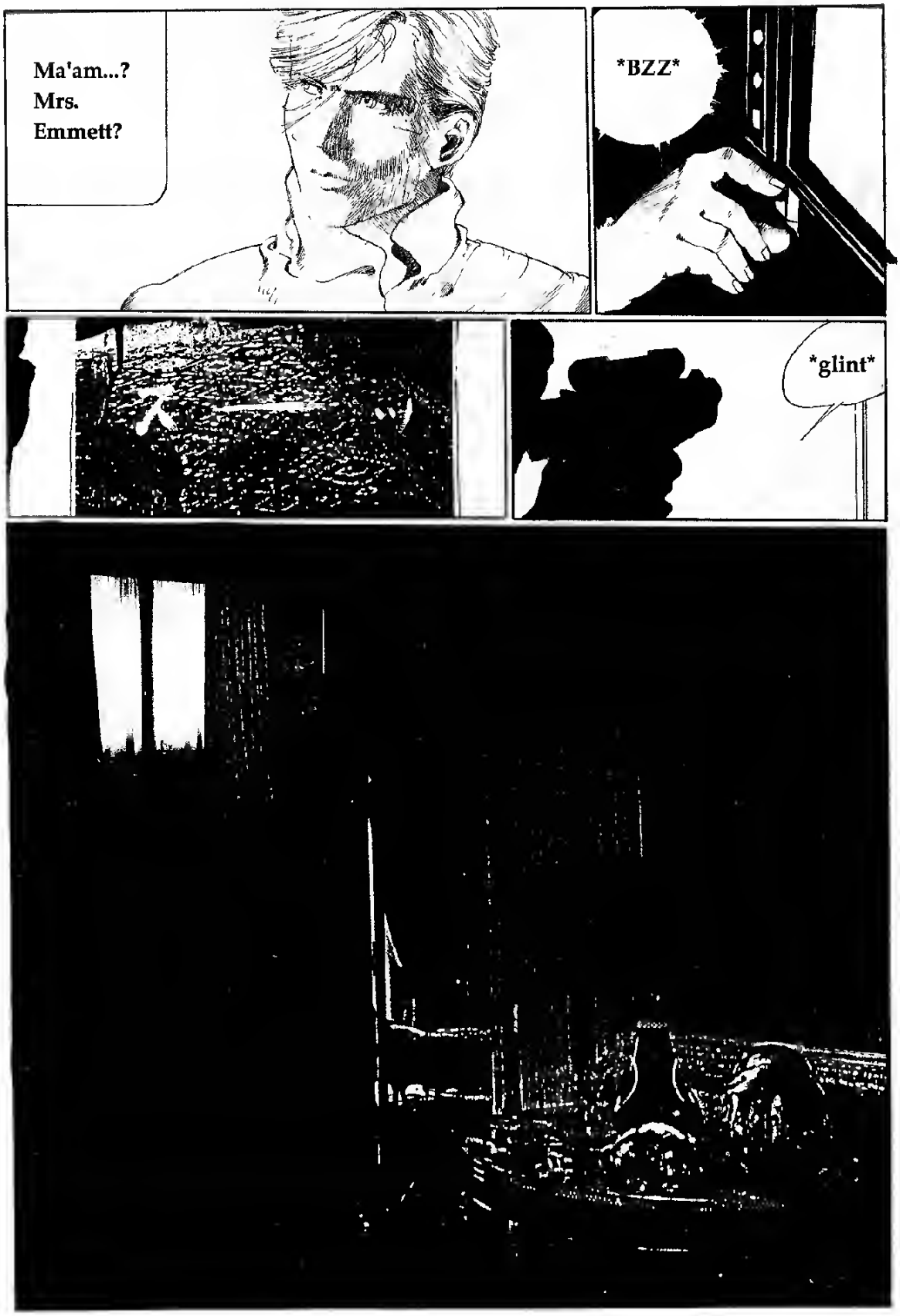

It's like I'm walking around with a gaping wound.
Bar 酒吧
洗衣机
I may soon lose everything I hold dear. Though I don't know if I'll ever have anything worth half so much again. Even my own life.


My only weapon is a single gun loaded with bullets from five years ago.

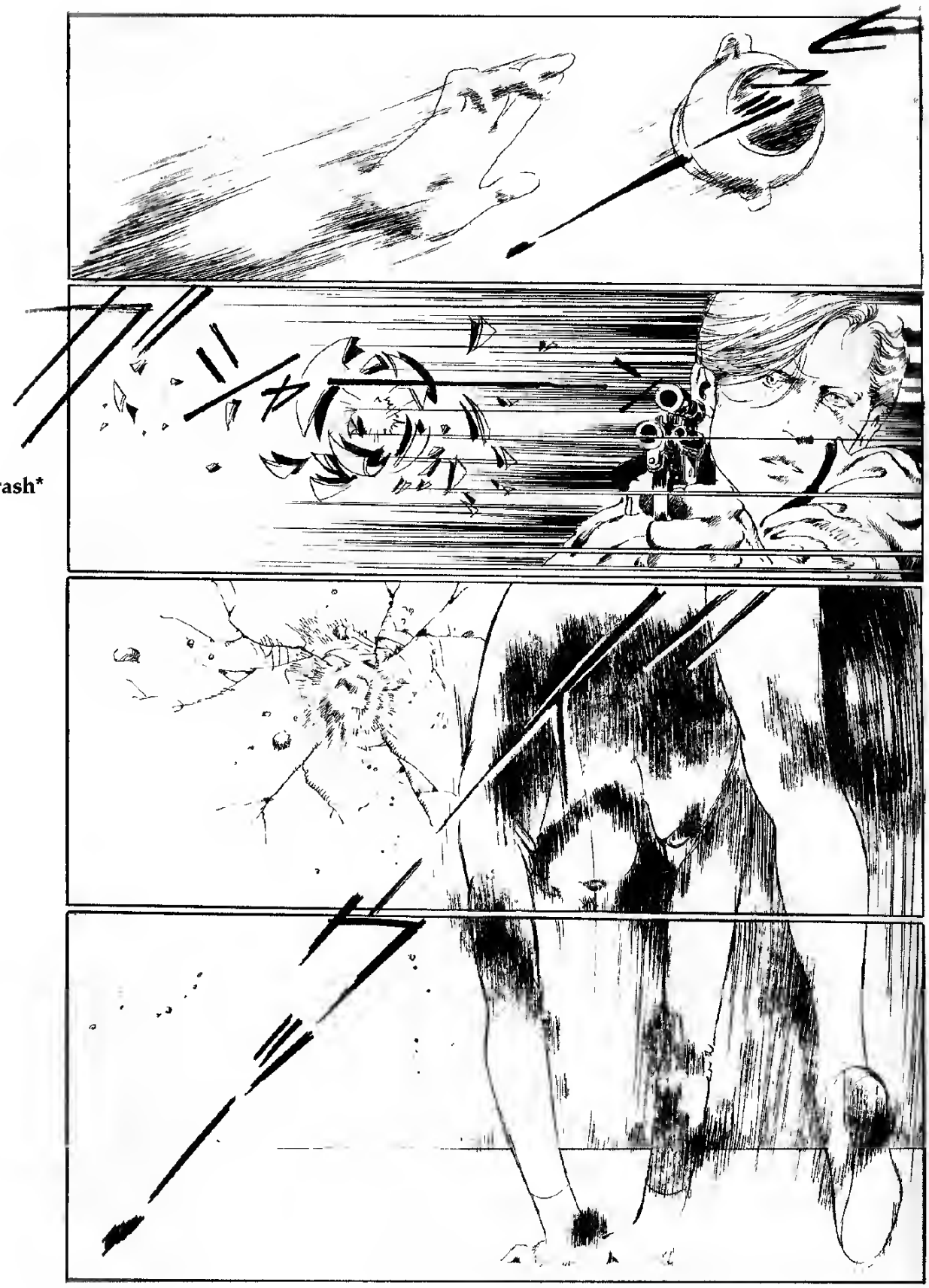
THUMP

THUMP

THUMP


Ma'am...?
Mrs.
Emmett?
BZZ
fwoosh
glint

whiz

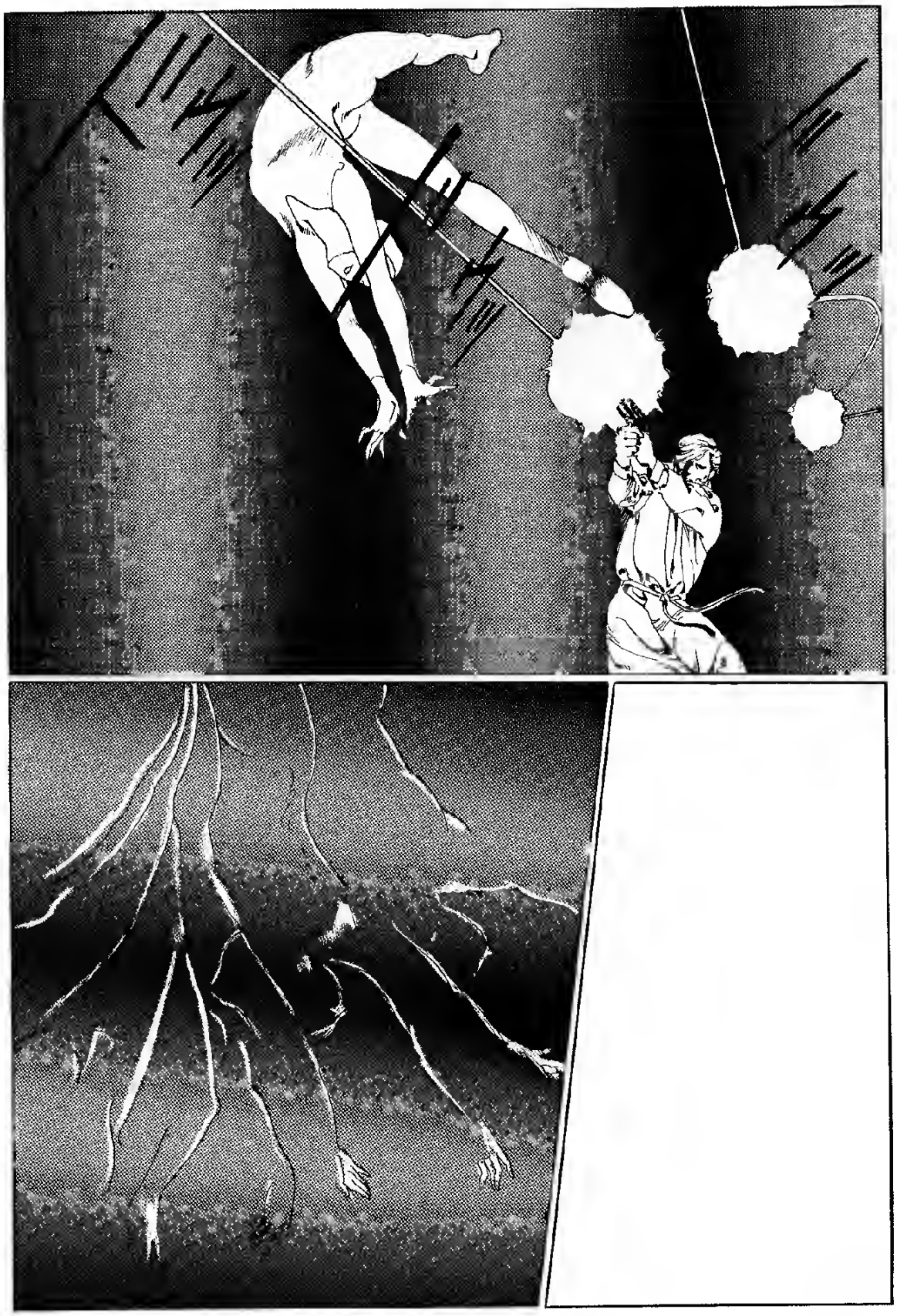


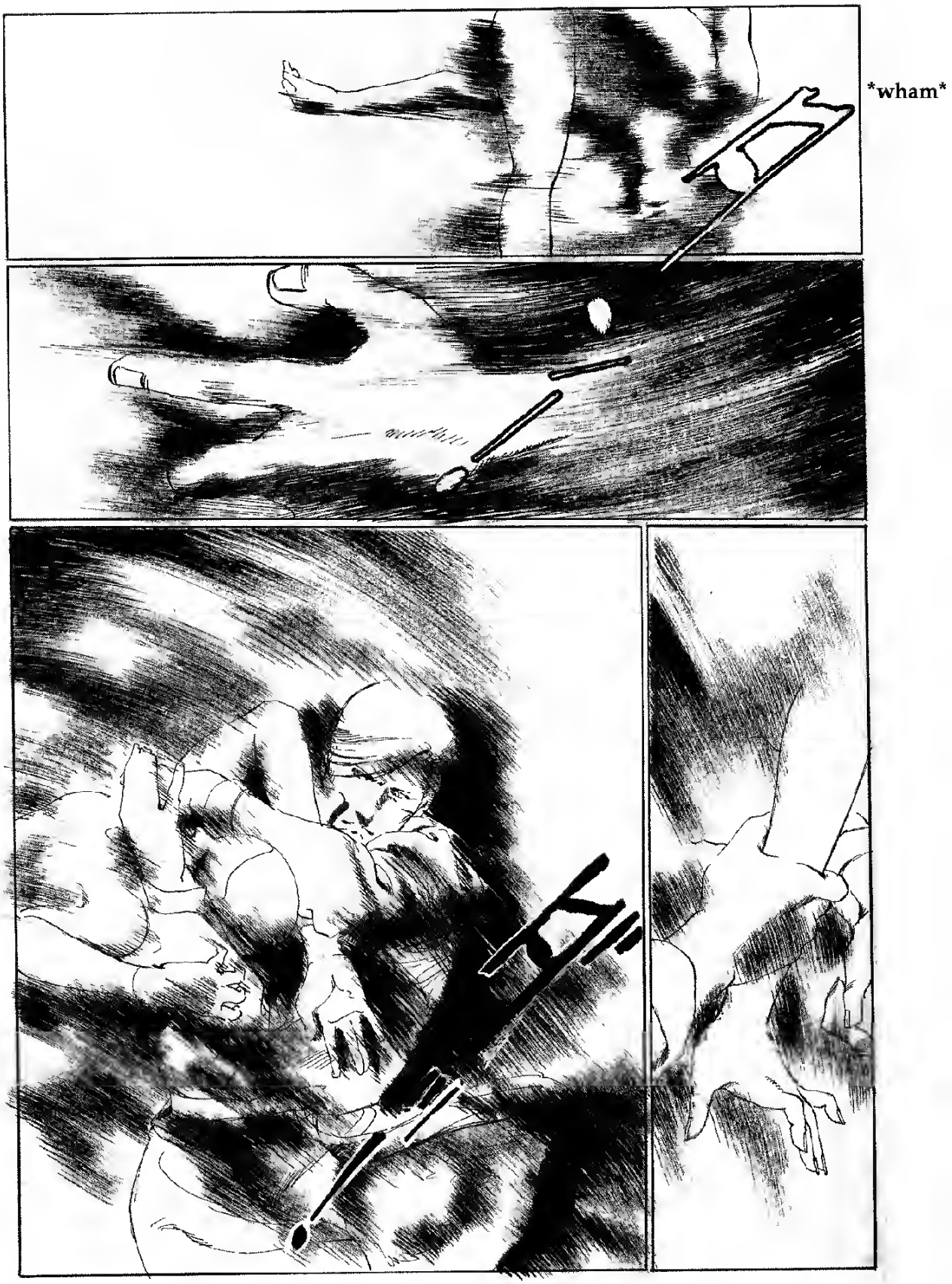
crash

wham

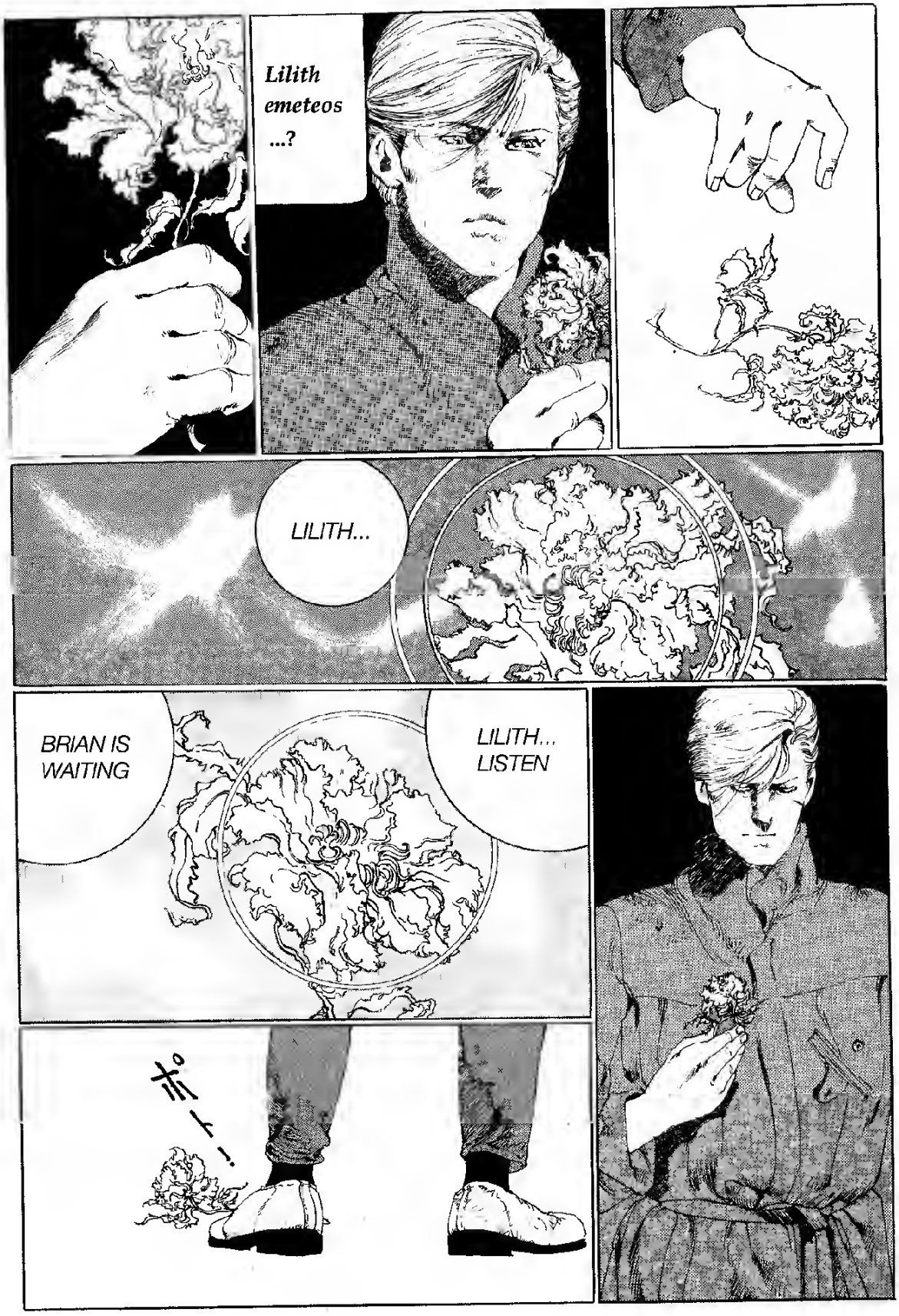
bang bang

bang

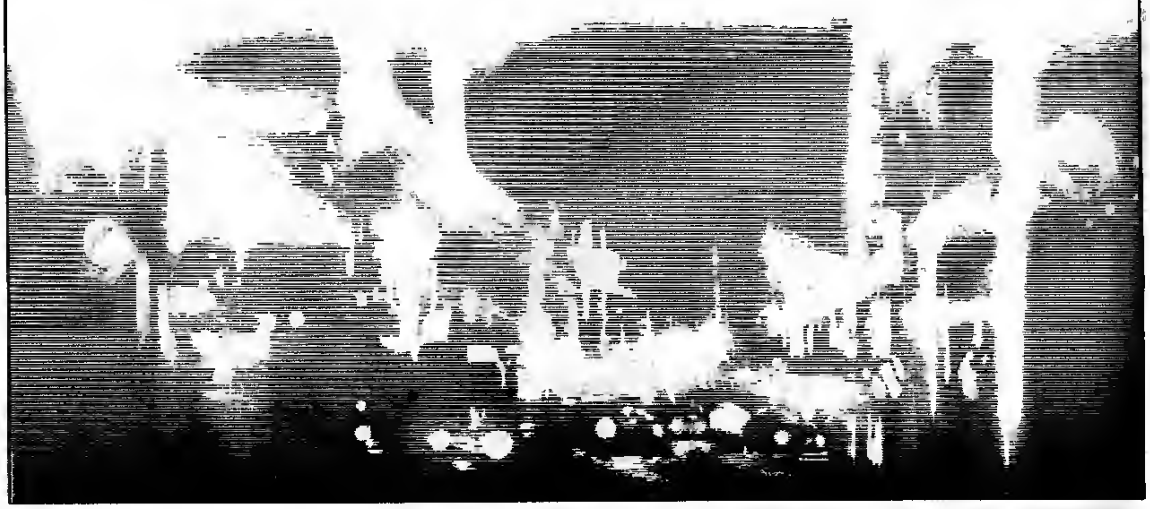


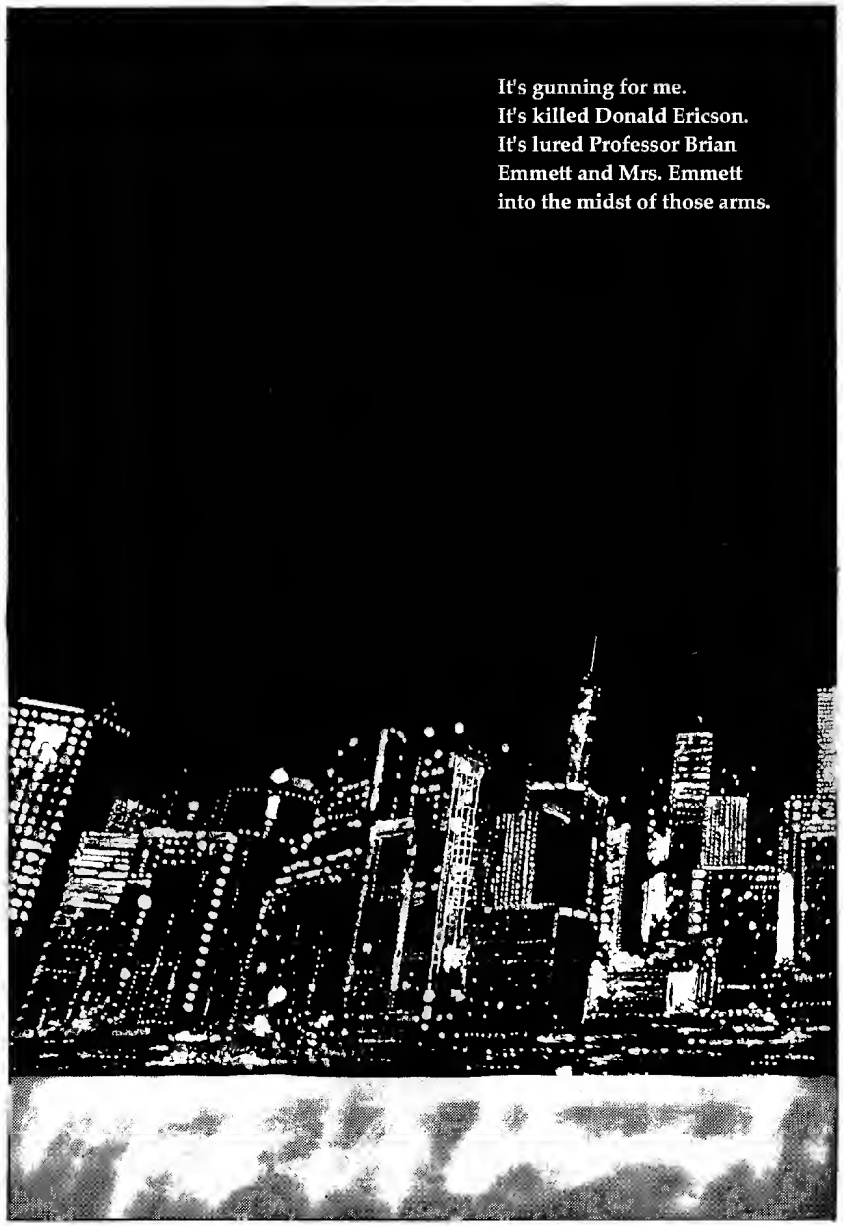

wham
slam

BANG

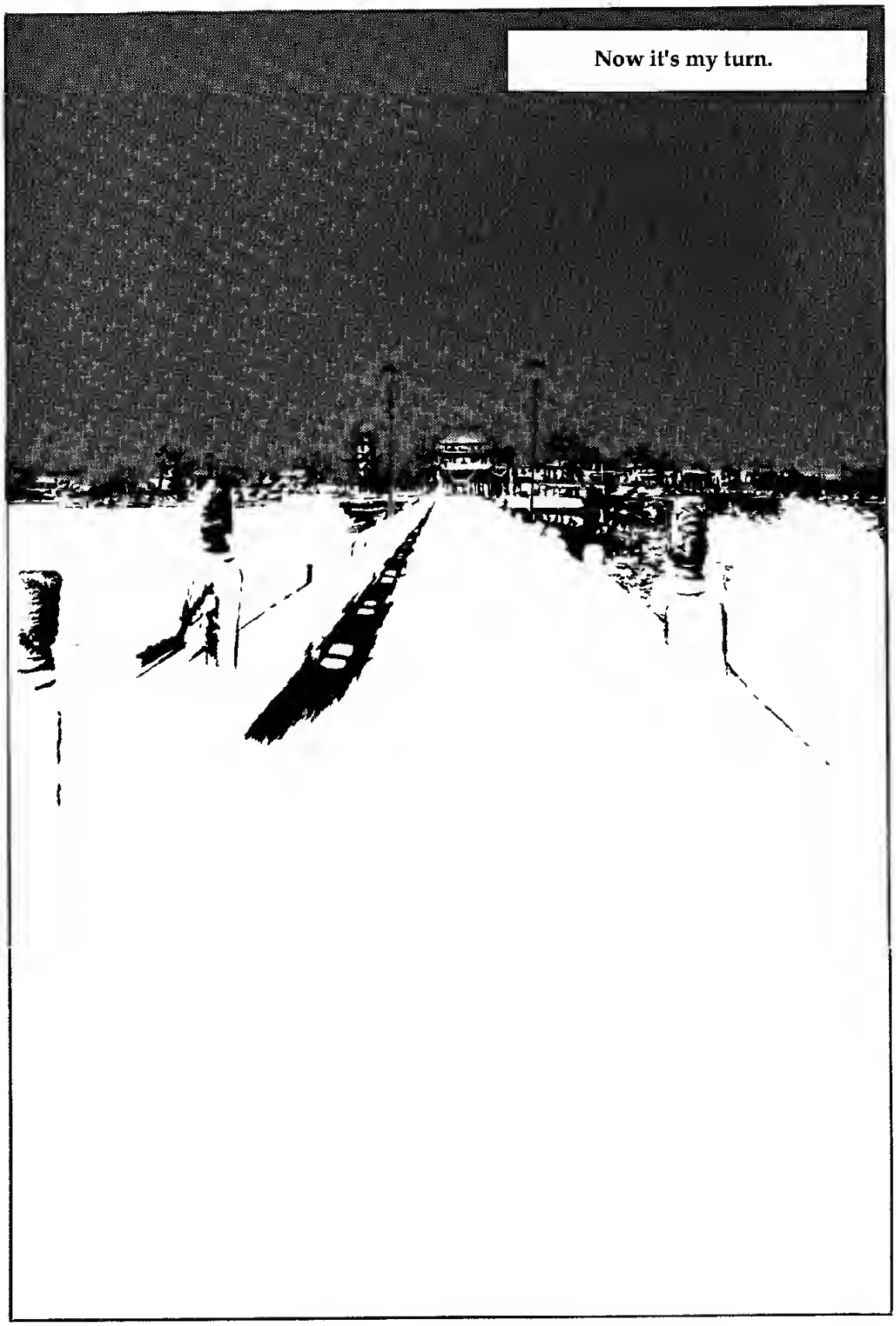

Lilith emeteos ...?
LILITH...
BRIAN IS WAITING
LILITH... LISTEN

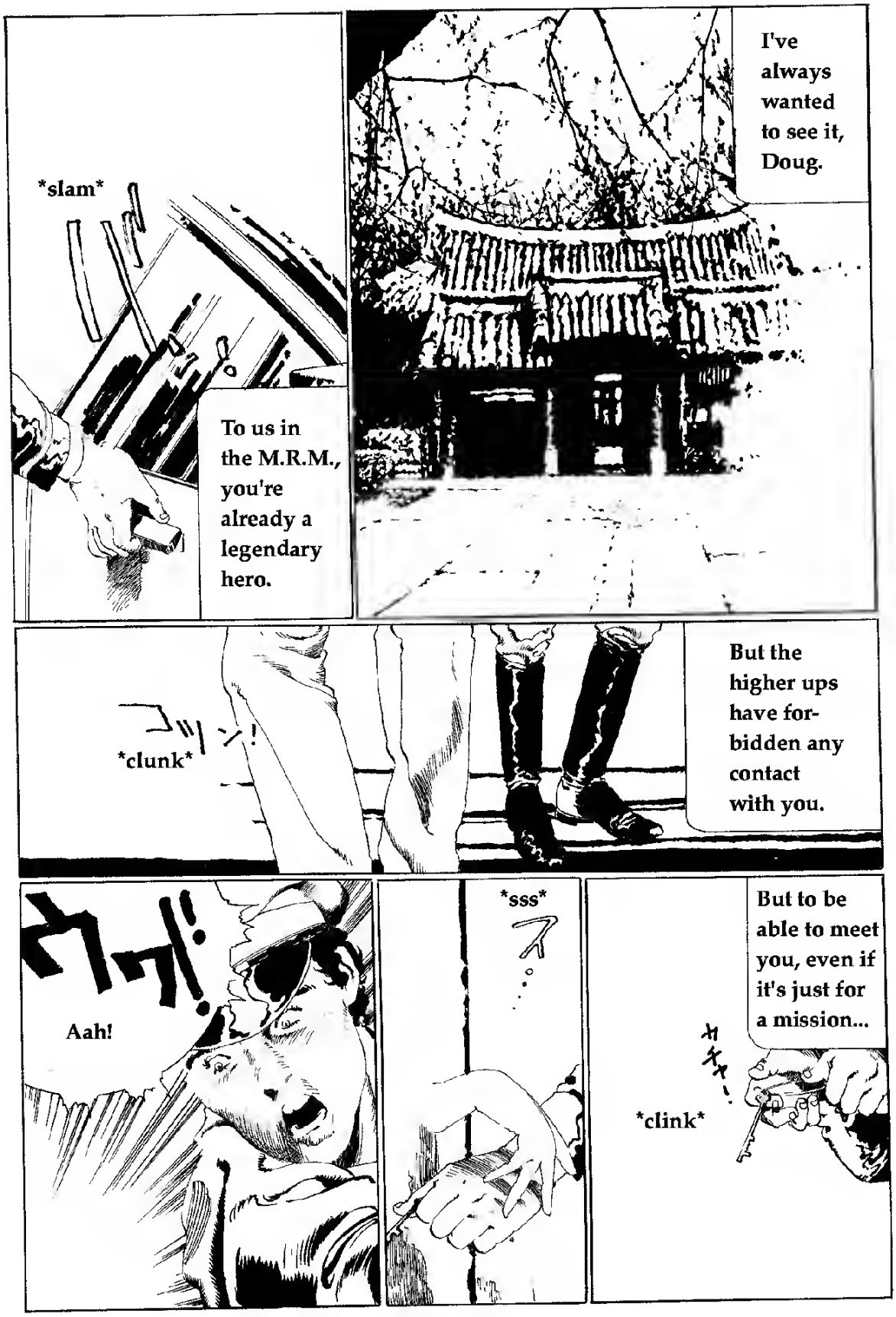
It's always an unpleasant feeling watching the garden's spirits lose their human form. No doubt these flowers in the guise of women condemn me as a murderer.




At long last the
labyrinthine tentacles
of the Garden are reaching
beyond its own borders.

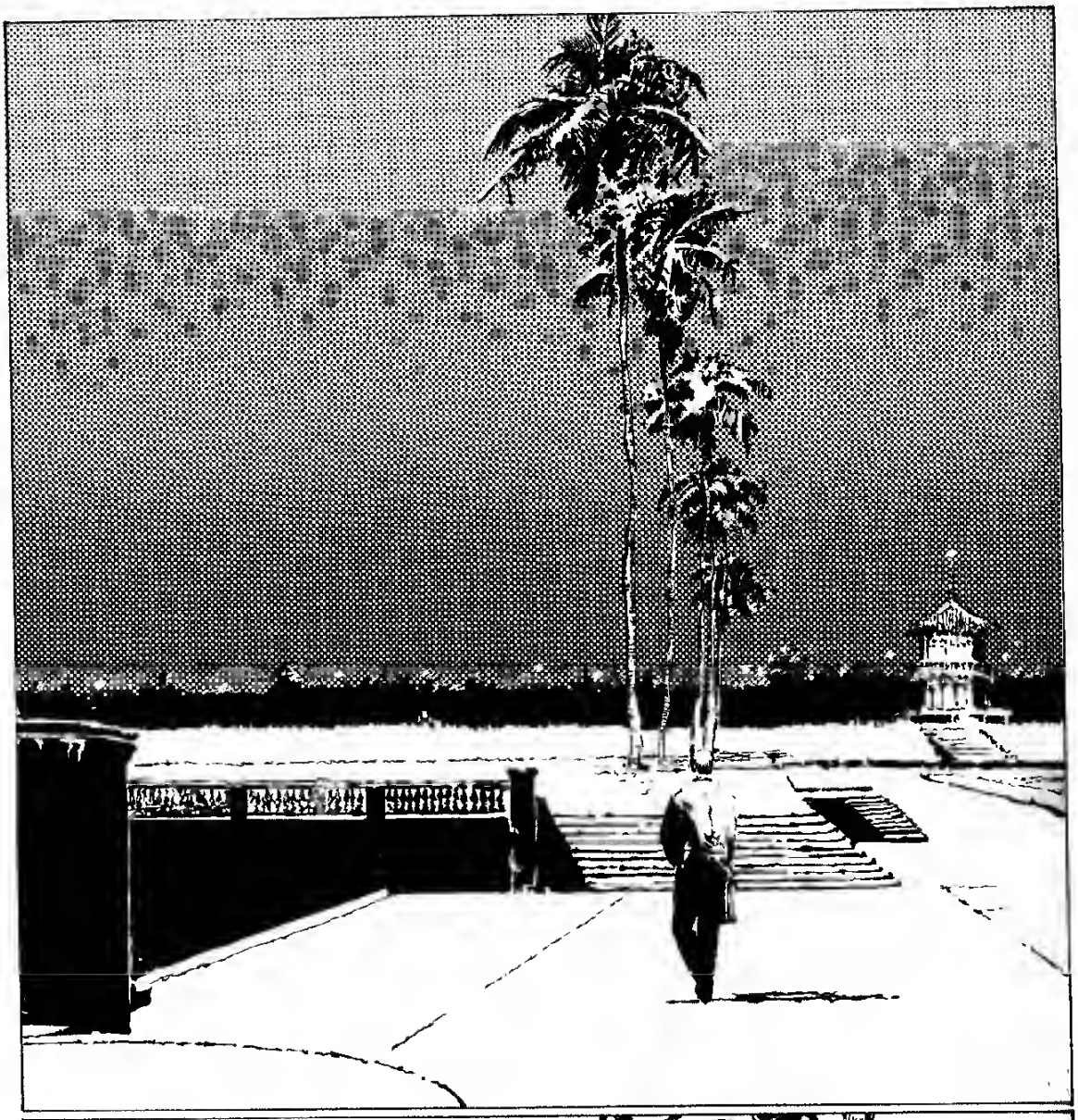
It's gunning for me.
It's killed Donald Ericson.
It's lured Professor Brian
Emmett and Mrs. Emmett
into the midst of those arms.


Now it's my turn.

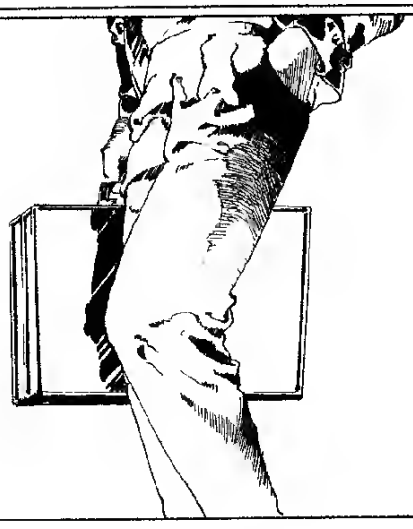

slam
To us in the M.R.M., you're already a legendary hero.
I've always wanted to see it, Doug.
clunk
But the higher ups have forbidden any contact with you.
Aah!
sss
clink
But to be able to meet you, even if it's just for a mission...

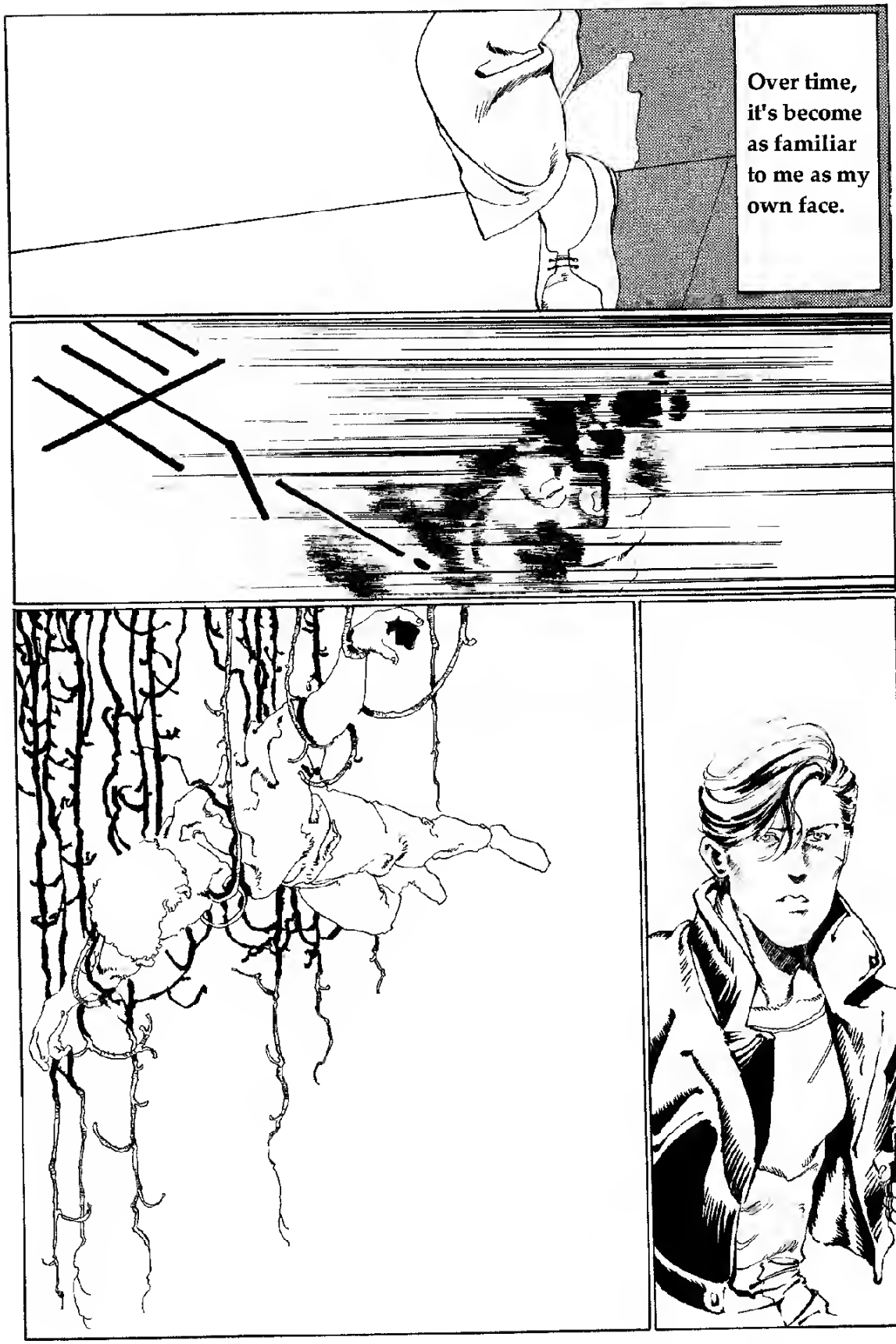
BOOM
My mission ends here...
No ...
Are you coming with me?

Oh...
tap

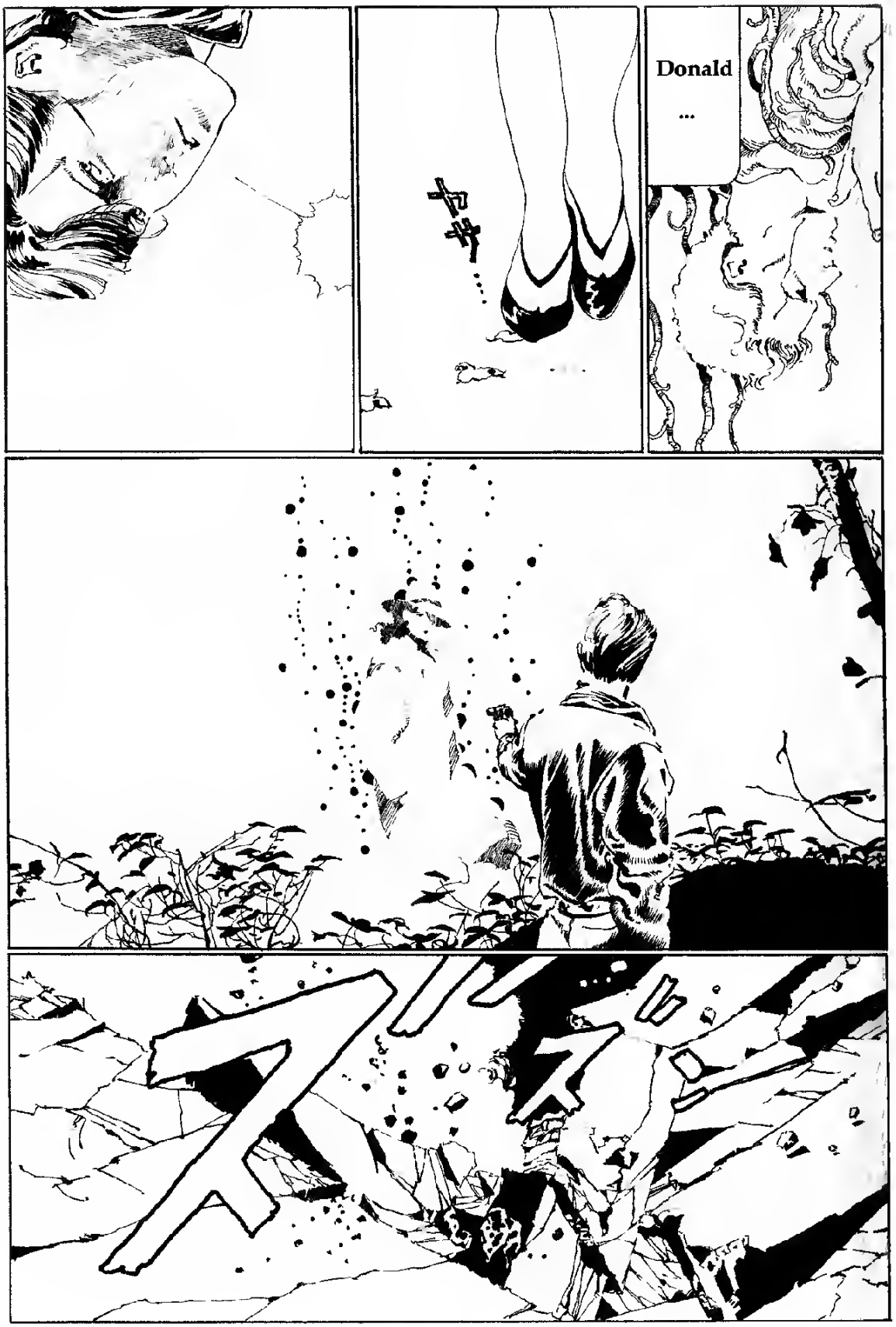


It's like the garden of a home one has grown accustomed to.




Over time, it's become as familiar to me as my own face.
whoosh

rustle



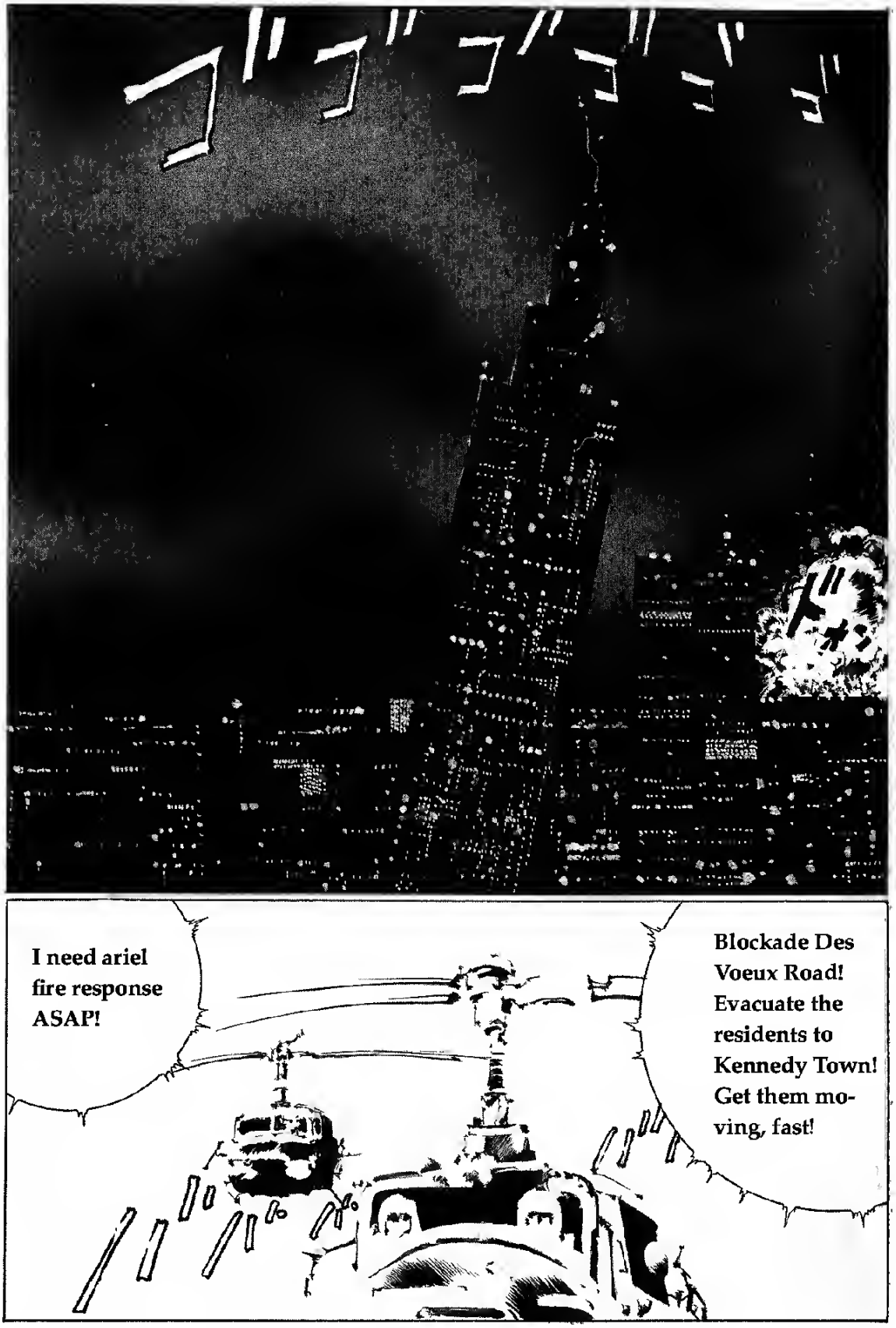
rumble

BOOM

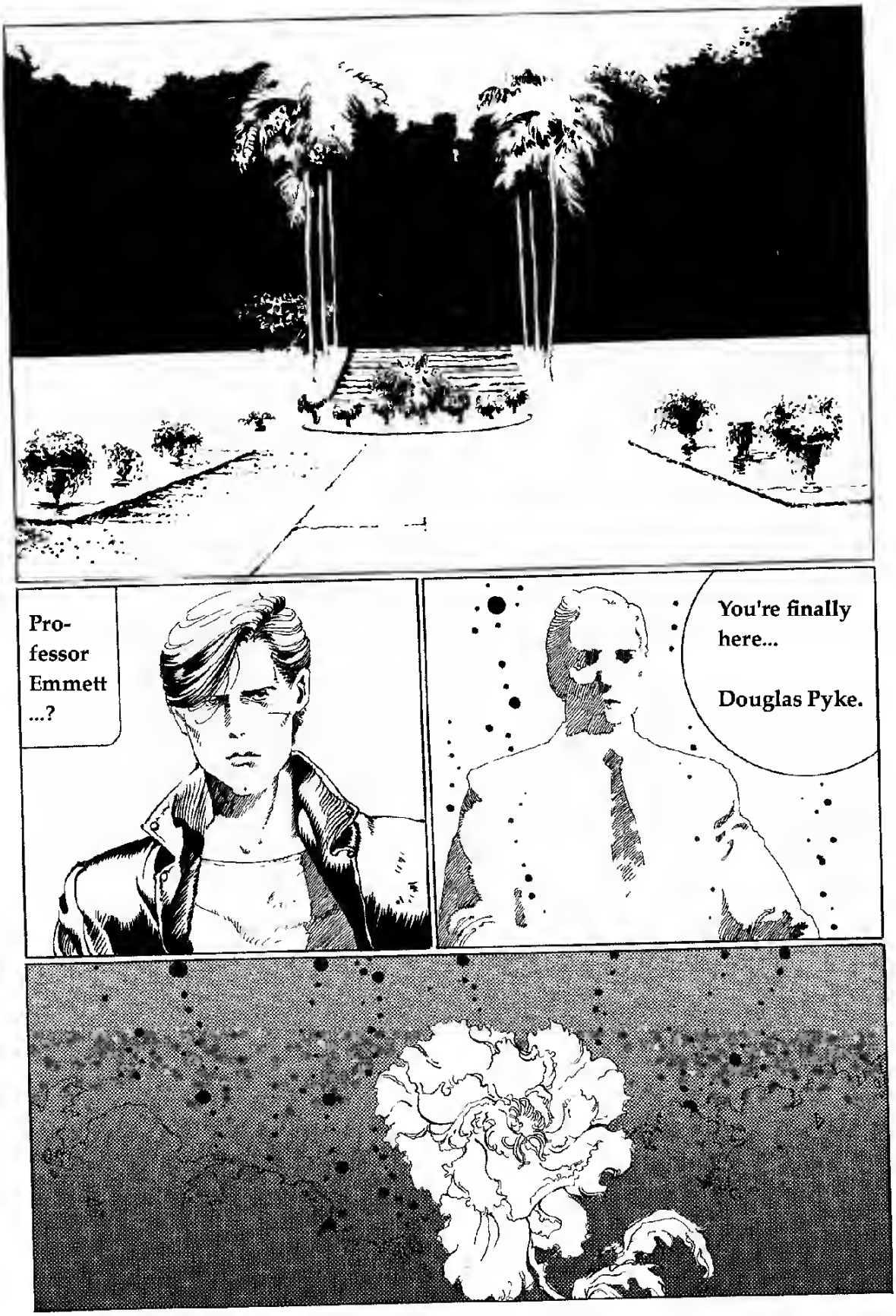
rumble

BOOM

rumble



 whup whup whup whup


Pro-
fessor
Emmett
...?
You're finally
here...
Douglas Pyke.

The mysteries of your enemy are many, Doug...

click

カチャ!
It is their way of protecting themselves.
They* are adept at reading hearts and bedeviling their owners.
You've gotten quite famous, haven't you, Suzie.

*Lilith emeteos

Is that so?

Rumors about you are running wild--about "the bewitching dancing girl"...

What is that?

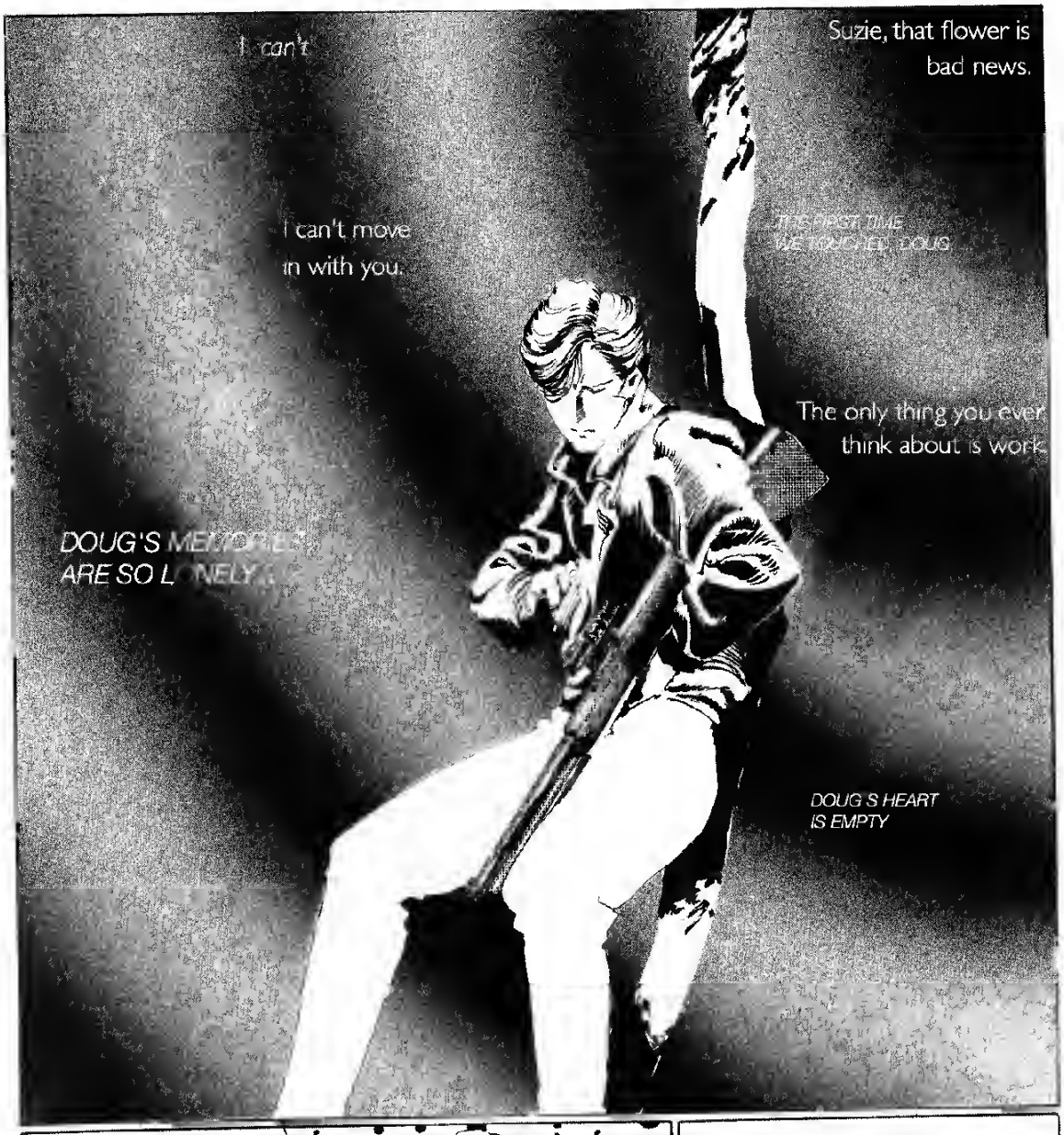
Why it must be because of that flower you carry.

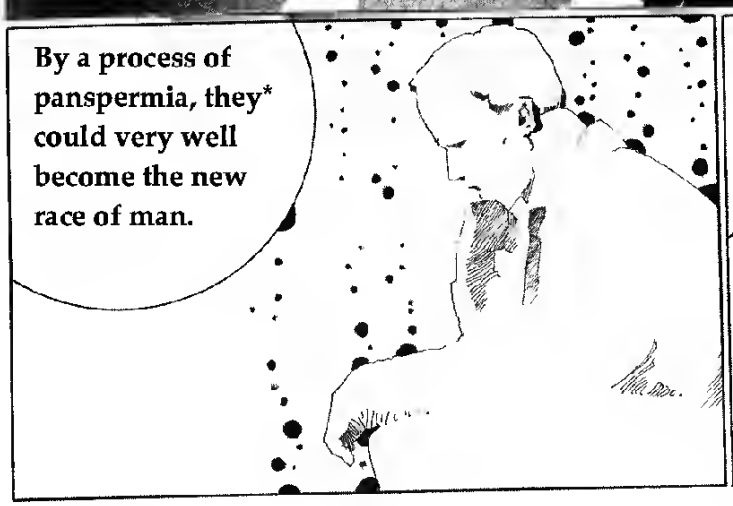
How mysterious that it never wilts. It was delivered to her dressing room last week.

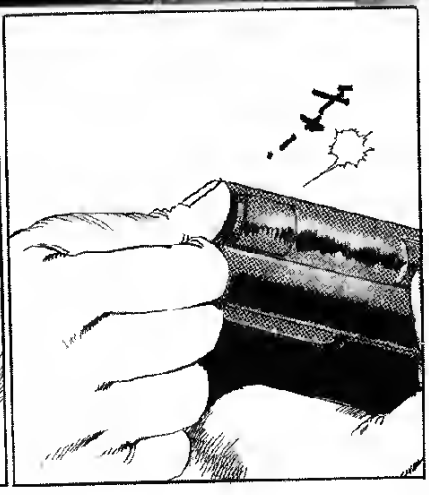
Suzie, this flower...

A flower? What the hell are you saying?!
A plant! We don't understand it exactly!
It's not that big, but it's putting out an unbelievable amount of power!
At this rate, there's no way we can handle--
Augh!
BOOM

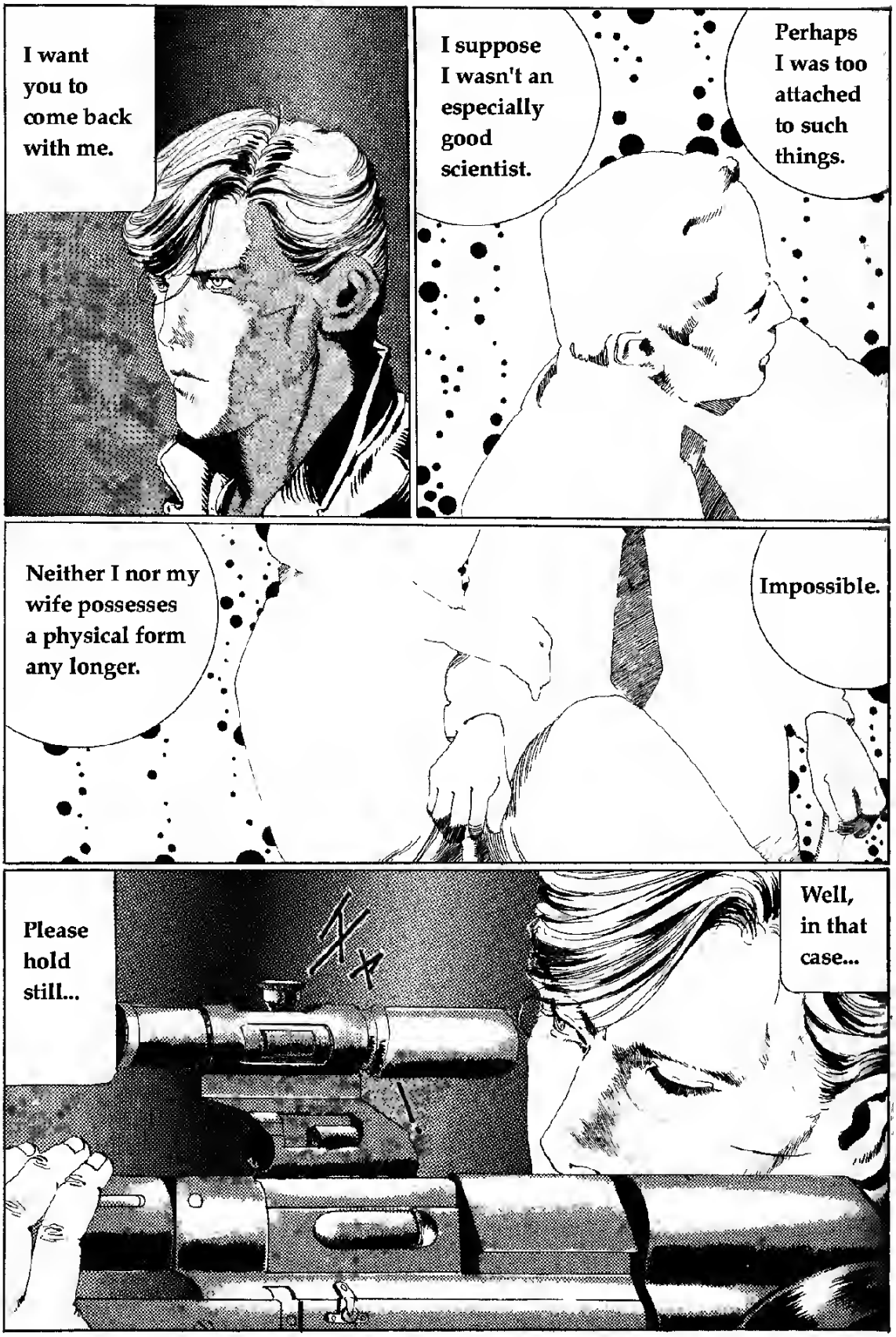
Doug...


I can't
Suzie, that flower is bad news.
I can't move in with you.
THE FIRST TIME WE TOUCHED, DOUG...
The only thing you ever think about is work.
DOUG'S METEORITES ARE SO LONELY...
DOUG'S HEART IS EMPTY





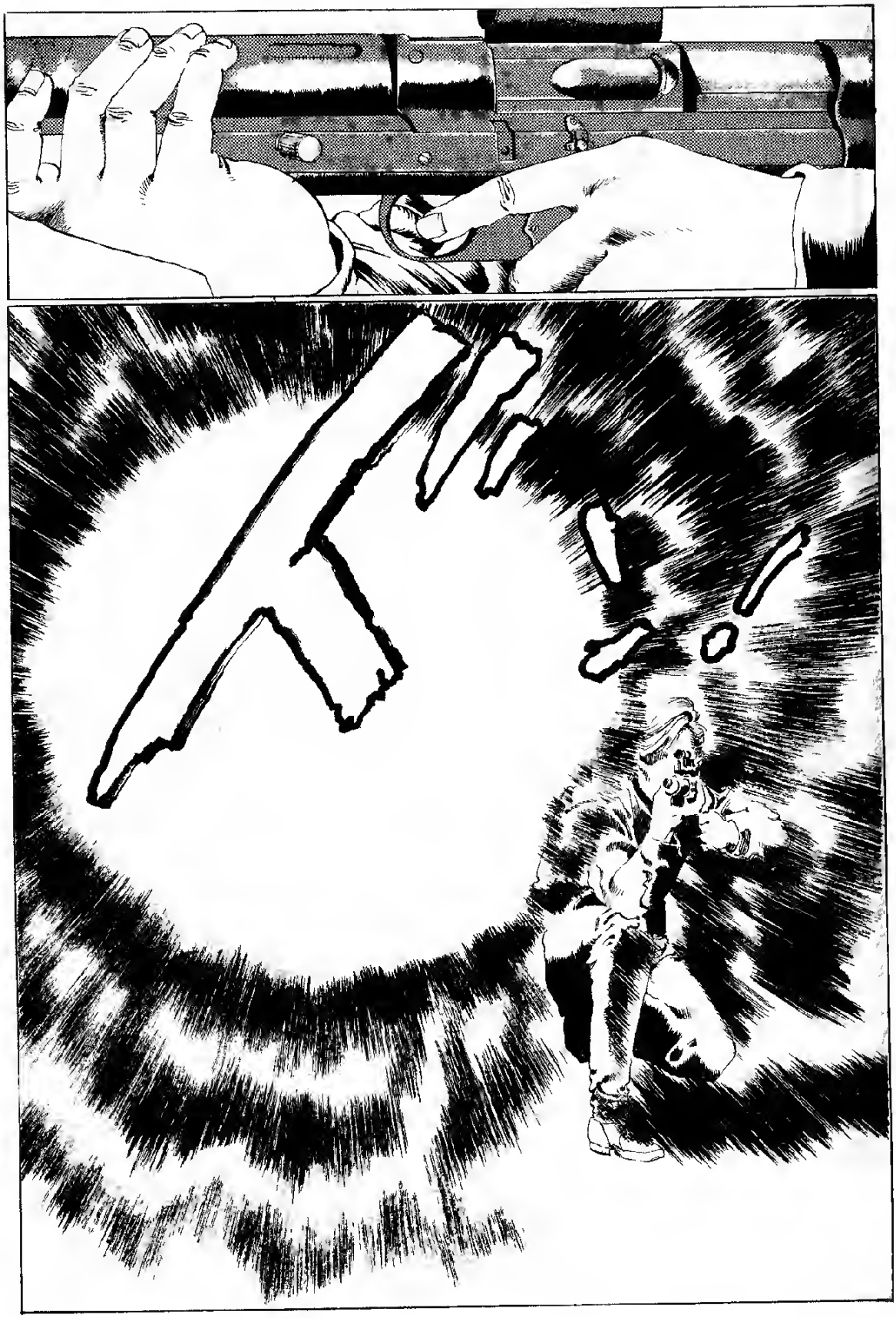
*Lilith emeteos


I want you to come back with me.
I suppose I wasn't an especially good scientist.
Perhaps I was too attached to such things.
Neither I nor my wife possesses a physical form any longer.
Impossible.
Please hold still...
Well, in that case...
click

Chief! The Garden!
What?
rumble

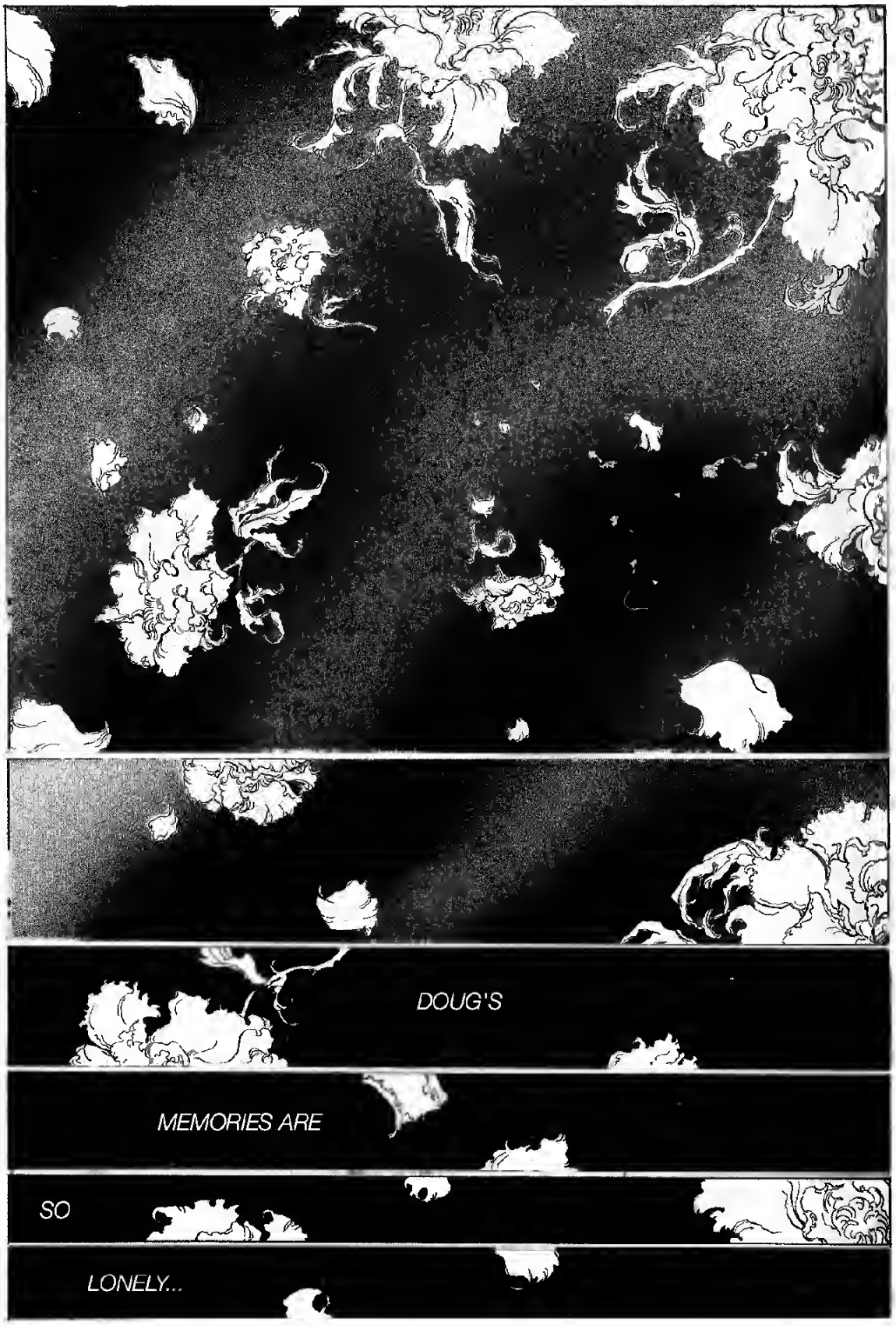
roar
thunder

rumble

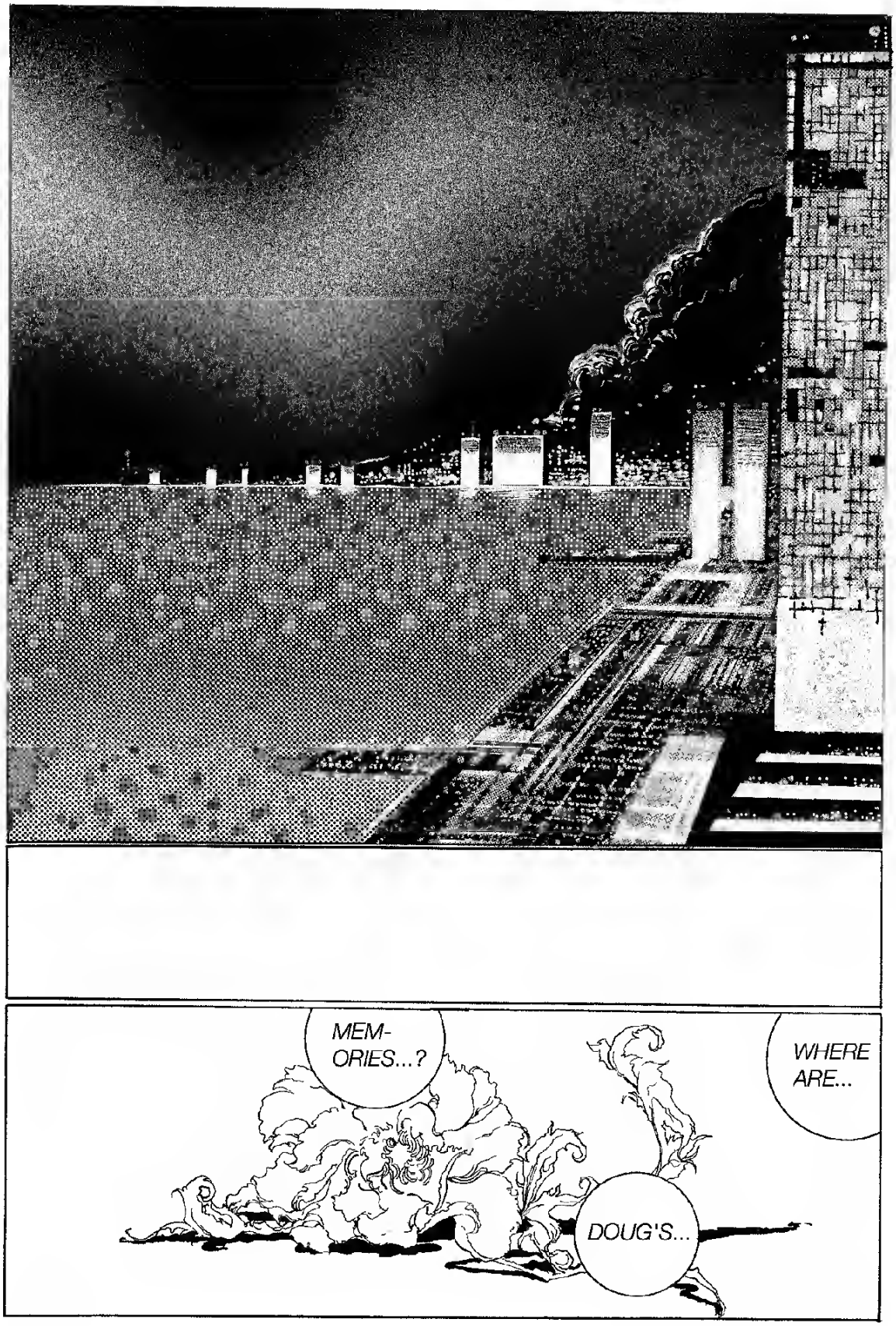


BANG

creeeeak


DOUG'S
MEMORIES ARE
SO
LONELY...

boom
dis-
appear
-ed...
The
Garden...



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